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ABSTRACT

In preparation for reauthorization of federal elementary and secondary education programs, a study was undertaken to determine how schools are educating the growing limited-English-proficient (LEP) population. Issues studied include: (1) characteristics of this population, nationally and in selected districts, and the challenges faced by school districts in educating them; (2) the ways that districts with linguistically diverse LEP students address the challenges; (3) promising approaches to use when linguistic diversity makes native language instruction difficult; and (4) the extent to which federal programs targeting this population provide the kinds of support districts need to implement programs. The report of the study, presented here, consists of a letter summarizing the findings and a number of appendixes. Appended materials include brief descriptions of educational strategies for instructing LEP students; a list of language spoken by LEP students in five districts to which site visits were made in 1991-92; comments on the study from the U.S. Department of Education; more detailed information on student numbers and characteristics, program designs, promising non-bilingual instructional approaches, and key federal programs; data on the students and programs in the five districts visited; and notes on the scope and methodology of census data analysis. Contains 14 references. (MSE)

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United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on Labor and Human Resources
U.S. Senate

January 1994

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

A Growing and Costly Educational Challenge Facing Many School Districts

ED 366 231

FL 021866

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United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Health, Education, and
Human Services Division

B-251268

January 28, 1994

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman, Committee on Labor and
Human Resources
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As the nation strives to achieve the national education goals,[1] the Congress has become concerned about the ability of schools to educate the increasing numbers of students who speak little or no English. In the last decade, the number of limited English proficient (LEP) students[2] increased by almost 26 percent. More than 2.3 million LEP students live in the United States, representing many different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In preparation for reauthorization of federal elementary and secondary education programs, you asked us to study how the nation's schools are educating these students. In response, we answered the following questions: (1) What are the characteristics of LEP students, nationally and in selected districts, and the challenges districts face in educating these students? (2) How do selected districts with LEP students from linguistically diverse backgrounds educate these students, including the extent to which academic subjects are taught in the students' native languages? (3) What approaches have been identified as promising when diversity of languages spoken by students makes native language instruction difficult? (4) Do key federal programs targeted to LEP students provide the types of support districts need to implement programs to serve these students?

Results in Brief

The nation's ability to achieve the national education goals is increasingly dependent on its ability to educate LEP students. Yet many districts—especially those with high numbers of LEP students who are

[1]In 1990, the President and governors agreed on six goals for the nation's education system, to be reached by the year 2000. They include, for example, making U.S. students first in math and science internationally and having all students achieving at high standards in five core academic subjects.

[2]These data are based on the 1980 and 1990 censuses, which collected data on children in specific age groups. For this analysis, we included all school age children—those from 5 to 17 years of age—living in families. We included children as LEP if they were reported as not speaking English only, or not speaking English very well. Other definitions of LEP—for example, in some federal programs—are broader; they include students who have difficulty not only in speaking English, but in reading, writing, or understanding it. Census provided no information on these other skills. For ease of presentation, throughout the report we use the term "students," rather than "children," when referring to Census data, though some of these children may not be enrolled in school.

linguistically and culturally diverse—are struggling to educate these students.

Although LEP students are heavily concentrated in a handful of states, almost every state in the nation has counties that have substantial numbers of LEP students. Districts with LEP students face a multitude of challenges beyond the obvious one of the language barrier. Almost half of all LEP students are also immigrants, representing many cultures and speaking a variety of languages, and in many cases come to this country with little or no education. LEP students are often poor and have significant social, health, and emotional needs.

Many LEP students in the five districts that we visited received limited support in understanding academic subjects, such as math and social studies. Districts could not provide bilingual—native language—instruction to all LEP students. Districts reported significant difficulties in obtaining sufficient numbers of bilingual teachers and materials in most languages. This situation was particularly true when student populations were diverse in terms of language and age; one district, for example, had students from almost 90 different language backgrounds. In many cases, students spent much of their time in subject area classes with teachers who did not understand their native language and who had little or no training in how to communicate with them.

Educators and researchers have developed approaches to provide academic subject instruction to LEP students when native language instruction is not possible, although the effectiveness of these promising nonbilingual approaches has not been definitively established. Useful approaches, for example, adapt curricula by making it more visually comprehensible; rely less on the traditional, language-dependent, lecture format; and provide subject area teachers with cultural diversity and language acquisition training to help them relate to LEP students. Implementing these approaches, however, can be difficult because they require substantial time, resources, and expertise.

Federal programs targeted to LEP students provide important types of services for improving the education of these students but limited financial support. These programs provide technical assistance and funds in support of district, state, and national efforts directed to critical areas such as teacher training and student assessment. But federal funding has not kept pace with the increase in the LEP population; in the last decade, funding for the key federal program directed to these students decreased,

when inflation is considered, by 40 percent, while the number of LEP students increased by more than 25 percent.

Background

Federal civil rights laws require that districts provide assistance to help LEP students participate in educational programs. This assistance varies, however. Often districts depend on English as a Second Language (ESL), a grammatically based method used to help LEP students learn English. Many experts are concerned that without additional support in understanding academic subjects, these students will fall well behind their English-speaking peers over the several years[3] it takes to become fluent in English. One approach used to help such students is bilingual instruction. This type of instruction is intended to help ensure academic progress—by providing instruction in key academic subjects in students' native languages (for example, Spanish or Chinese)—as well as promote proficiency in English. Many districts provide bilingual instruction for at least some of their LEP students; some states require such instruction for some LEP students. (See app. I for descriptions of ESL, bilingual, and other basic instructional strategies for LEP students.)

Several federal programs fund services for LEP students. The Bilingual Education Act—Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended—is the key federal legislation directed to these students. The stated policy of the act is to support educational programs that help to ensure both English language proficiency and academic achievement for students served. The act provides about $192 million for (1) grants to districts and (2) a variety of other national and state activities, such as technical assistance. The act puts a priority on establishing and operating bilingual projects, but also allows for projects using nonbilingual approaches—called Special Alternative Instructional Programs (SAIP)—when bilingual instruction is not practicable. Up to 25 percent of the funds allocated to districts can be used for SAIPS.

LEP students also receive services under other federal programs. Chief among them are (1) Chapter 1 of ESEA, which provides supplemental instruction in reading, math, and language arts to educationally disadvantaged students; and (2) the Emergency Immigrant Education Act of 1984 (EIEA), which provides about $30 million annually to help districts meet the educational needs of immigrant students, many of whom are LEP.

[3]Estimates for how long it takes to learn English vary, and the time for each student depends on a variety of factors, including the initial level of fluency and the quality of instruction. Overall, estimates for the time it takes for an LEP student to become sufficiently fluent in English to succeed in an all-English class range from 3 to 7 years.

Recently, federal attention has focused on systemic educational reform to improve the system for all students—not on reform for specific at-risk students, such as LEP students. This type of reform sets high standards for all students; ensures that curricula, instruction, and assessment are appropriate for those standards; and ensures that teachers are prepared to help each student meet those standards. We recently reported on the experience of several districts that had implemented this type of reform. We cautioned that special efforts may be needed to help ensure that at-risk students, such as LEP students, receive the assistance they need to meet the new, higher standards of systemic reform.[4]

Scope and Methodology

To answer your questions, we analyzed 1980 and 1990 Bureau of the Census data to determine (1) the characteristics and distribution of LEP students nationally and (2) what changes have occurred in the past decade.[5] To determine how selected districts were educating these students, we visited five school districts—two in California, and one each in Massachusetts, New York, and Texas—that had high numbers of LEP students from many different language backgrounds. To identify promising approaches for educating diverse groups of LEP students, we reviewed literature, interviewed experts, and visited five additional districts that were using these approaches. Finally, we interviewed Department of Education officials and other experts to discuss key federal programs and types of assistance they provided.

We focused our efforts concerning instruction of LEP students on the extent to which bilingual instruction was provided because that type of information was specifically requested. A substantial body of research points to the effectiveness of bilingual instruction; many educators believe it is preferable to nonbilingual instruction for educating LEP students, both for teaching English and for teaching academic subjects while the student is learning English. Others strongly disagree, however, and research to determine the relative merits of bilingual and nonbilingual approaches has not conclusively resolved the debate. In our study, we did not attempt to address the issue of which method is most effective, nor did we include a comparison of program costs for bilingual and nonbilingual instructional programs.

[4]See Systemwide Education Reform: Federal Leadership Could Facilitate District-Level Efforts (GAO/HRD-93-97, Apr. 30, 1993).

[5]See also School Age Demographics: Recent Trends Pose New Educational Challenges (GAO/HRD-93-105BR, Aug. 5, 1993).

We carried out our work between July 1992 and July 1993 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

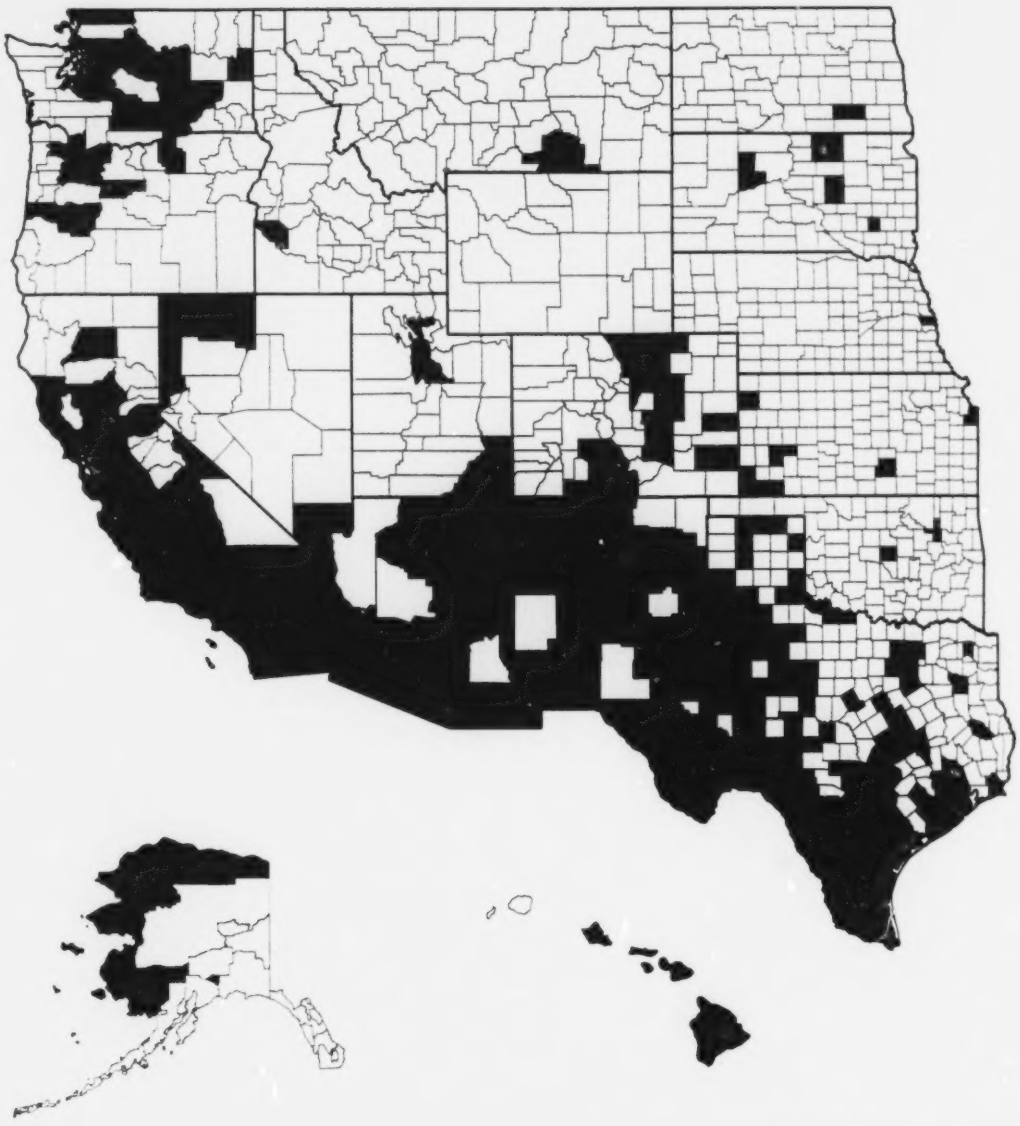
Many Districts Have High Numbers of LEP Students and Face Significant Challenges Educating Them

Although 72 percent of LEP students are concentrated in six states,[6] about one-sixth of the counties (533 out of 3,140) located in 47 states have substantial numbers of LEP students.[7] (See fig. 1.)

[6]The states are California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. For purposes of this discussion, we include Washington, D.C., as a state.

[7]We considered a county to have a substantial number of LEP students if at least 5 percent—about the proportion of LEP students nationwide—of the students were LEP or if it had at least 500 LEP students. We chose 500 because this definition parallels EIEA, which provides funds to districts if 500 or more (or 3 percent or more) of the students are immigrants who have been attending U.S. schools for less than 3 academic years.

Figure 1: More Than 500 Counties Have Substantial Numbers of LEP Students



Note: Shaded areas indicate the 533 counties in which at least 5 percent or 500 students were LEP, according to 1990 decennial Census data.

Districts with LEP students face a multitude of challenges; one key challenge is language and cultural diversity. More than 40 percent of all LEP students are also immigrants, representing many cultures and speaking a variety of languages.[8] Educators face the daunting task of communicating with students from many different language backgrounds.

Census data show that in 1990, almost one-third of the 533 counties, as well as 24 of the nation's 25 largest metropolitan areas, had 10 or more non-English languages represented. But Census data cannot paint the complete picture of language diversity because Census collects information on less than 15 non-English languages. Data obtained in the districts we visited may be more illustrative of the challenges posed by language diversity. For example, almost 90 different languages were represented in one of the districts. (See app. II for a list of languages represented in the districts we visited.)

Cultural diversity as well as linguistic diversity presented challenges for the districts we visited. Officials noted that failure to understand diverse student cultures often hindered effective teacher-student communication. For example, one teacher told us of an incident in which a student ran crying from the classroom for apparently no reason at all. Finally, school officials realized that a picture of an owl with the student's name on it had scared her because the owl is the symbol of death in her native country.

Districts faced other challenges, beyond the obvious one of communicating with these students. For example, concentrations of LEP students are often accompanied by concentrations of immigrant students. Census data show that in 1990, about 43 percent of all LEP students were immigrants. Both LEP and immigrant students are almost twice as likely as other students to be poor; about 30 percent of immigrant students and about 37 percent of LEP students were poor, compared with about 17 percent of all students, Census data show. In districts we visited, the poverty rate, as reported by the districts for all students, ranged from 35 percent to 63 percent. Four of these districts had experienced increases

[8]Data are based on the 1980 and 1990 censuses. We defined "immigrant students" as those children who are (1) foreign born of parents who are not U.S. citizens or (2) native born in families with a mother who immigrated to the United States during the 10 years before each census. Nationally, about 43 percent of those students who were LEP were also immigrants, using this definition.

in the poverty rate in the last 10 years, fueled largely, according to officials, by immigrant and LEP students.[9]

In addition, these students often have significant health and emotional needs, especially those immigrants that had experienced the trauma of war and life in refugee camps. They are highly transient, making continuity in instruction and planning difficult, and they often continue to arrive throughout the school year, contributing, in many cases, to school overcrowding.[10] For example, in one district, a consequence of this overcrowding is that some students must be graduated from ESL classes before they are truly fluent in English to make room in the ESL classes for the new arrivals. Another particularly difficult challenge is the recent arrival of many immigrants, including those of high school age, who have had little or no schooling and are illiterate even in their native language.

Finally, officials in each district discussed the substantial difficulties faced in getting parents of LEP students involved in their children's education. Officials saw parental involvement as important for student achievement. One major difficulty was that many parents were illiterate in their native language as well as English. Districts or schools reported a variety of efforts to involve parents, including using interpreters (often community volunteers), translating notices into a variety of languages, providing parenting classes in a variety of subjects, and calling parents directly, especially when the parents were known to be illiterate and unable to read translated notices. Difficulties in communicating with and involving parents continued, even after the students themselves become fluent in English, officials said.[11]

[9]Information on persons' poverty status in Census data is based on the standard definition of poverty status prescribed by the Office of Management and Budget as a statistical standard of federal agencies. (See app. VI for a more detailed discussion of this definition.) Poverty data from districts are based on the number of students that (1) live in households that receive Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) or (2) are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches under the National School Lunch Program.

[10]A recent study by the RAND Corporation provides additional evidence of the challenges districts face in educating immigrant students. To help meet these students' needs, that study called for changes, such as increasing the availability of bilingual teachers and materials and improving coordination of health and social services. (See Lorraine M. McDonnell and Paul T. Hill, Newcomers in American Schools: Meeting the Educational Needs of Immigrant Youth, the RAND Corporation (Santa Monica, CA: 1993).

[11]Census data show that in 1990 there were, nationally, almost 600,000 students who, though not LEP, were linguistically isolated. That is, they lived in households where no one aged 14 or older spoke only English, and no one aged 14 or older who spoke a language other than English spoke English very well.

Districts Visited Often Provided Limited Support to Help LEP Students Understand Academic Subjects

In the five districts we visited, many LEP students received limited support in academic subjects. Bilingual instruction was not possible for many LEP students; in one district, for example, 3 percent of about 21,000 LEP students received bilingual instruction. In this and other districts, those students not in bilingual classes often spent much of their time in academic subject classes with teachers who had (1) little or no training in how to communicate with them and (2) difficulty assessing these students' academic and language skills on an ongoing basis.

In each district we visited, the number and mix of students made providing bilingual instruction in academic subjects to some students impractical. Groups of students who had common native languages were spread across many grades and schools. For example, one district had 99 Romanian students located in 12 different schools and representing six grade levels. This same district had several schools with students from as many as 15 different language backgrounds, often with fewer than 25 students in a given language group, spread across many grades. Likewise, some schools at another district we visited had students from at least nine different language backgrounds at a given grade level.

School and district officials also consistently cited the shortage of bilingual teachers and materials as a primary reason for not providing bilingual instruction; many experts have pointed to a national shortage of bilingual teachers. In each district, some students spoke languages not historically represented in this country in large numbers and for whom bilingual teachers and materials have been especially hard to find. Although some districts have bilingual teachers and materials in a few more common languages, especially Spanish, bilingual teachers and materials are virtually nonexistent in languages such as Hmong (Southeast Asia), Khmer (Cambodia), and Korean. But even in districts where significant numbers of students spoke the same language, such as Spanish, districts reported that bilingual teachers were hard to find. For example, a few of the districts we visited made rather extensive efforts to recruit Spanish bilingual teachers—including going to Spain and Puerto Rico—but still lacked adequate numbers of these teachers.

The districts generally provided LEP students with ESL instruction, but often provided little support to help students not in bilingual classes comprehend the academic instruction they received. In some cases, assistance was provided by bilingual aides, but, officials said, the aides seldom received much training in how to instruct students and, in addition, these aides were usually not provided for all of the languages

represented in the class. In several districts, even some ESL teachers had no special training and were not certified as ESL instructors. Two examples illustrate this limited support.

- District 1: More than 15,000 students—almost two-thirds of the district's LEP students—received 60 minutes of ESL daily from teachers who had not been certified as ESL teachers. In the academic subject classes, few native language aides provided assistance, and most teachers had received no extra training in how to educate these students.
- District 2: At one junior high school we visited, LEP students were in ESL classes all day and had no instruction in math, science, or social studies.

District officials frequently cited a lack of adequate resources as the primary reason for not providing ESL and academic teachers with special training for teaching LEP students. Officials in several of the districts also emphasized that postsecondary programs to train classroom teachers do not prepare them for dealing with the substantial needs of the increasing LEP population in the nation's schools. Department of Education officials echoed this concern.

Districts also had limited abilities to assess LEP students' language proficiency and academic achievement levels. Experts generally believe districts need to accurately assess both aspects of students' abilities to provide LEP students with appropriate instruction. Many districts use standardized achievement tests to determine student needs for special services and to track overall district performance. Standardized tests are available in Spanish to assess students' Spanish language proficiency as well as achievement in certain academic subjects. But students with native languages other than Spanish must first achieve English proficiency before they can be assessed on academic achievement tests.

Promising Approaches to Provide Instruction in Academic Subjects Identified, but Implementation Difficult

Educators and researchers have developed promising approaches to provide academic subject instruction to LEP students when native language instruction is not possible. These approaches change curricula and instruction to (1) focus on key concepts, (2) rely less on language-dependent lecture and more on visual and hands-on experiences, and (3) encourage students' use of their native languages—for example by providing reading material in the native language—even when teachers do not understand those languages. In addition, to help them relate to LEP students, academic subject teachers receive training in topics such as cultural diversity.

One study, funded by the Department of Education, identified exemplary programs that use these promising nonbilingual approaches.[12] This study suggests the potential effectiveness of these approaches, but many experts—including one of the study's authors—caution that these approaches should not replace bilingual instruction if such instruction could otherwise be provided. Some noted, for example, that, although these nonbilingual approaches can help students meet high standards—for both English language proficiency and academic achievement—bilingual instruction allows for more detailed and richer coverage of academic subjects because it facilitates a faster pace and allows more examples to be used.

The Department-funded study, as well as experiences in the districts we visited, indicates that incorporating these nonbilingual approaches could require substantial time and resources. Perhaps the most critical and resource-intensive aspect of the programs that the study describes is teacher training. The programs relied heavily on academic subject teachers who had received extensive training in English language acquisition, cultural diversity, and strategies for instructing LEP students in academic subjects. Officials at one of the exemplary programs noted that they provide an intensive week-long staff development program, with follow-up during the next 2 years.

Districts may also need outside help in developing and implementing promising nonbilingual approaches. The schools and districts with exemplary programs used existing local and state funds, reallocating scarce resources to support program implementation. Each of the exemplary programs, however, also obtained outside funding to help finance its efforts; several used consultants in designing and implementing their programs.

Several of the districts we visited were trying to implement at least some of these approaches, but had limited success. In some districts, officials told us they had been slow to react to changing student enrollments. By the time efforts got underway, these districts were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem. One district, for example, had more than 15,000 LEP students who were taught by teachers not certified in ESL or bilingual

[12]William J. Tikunoff and others, Final Report: A Descriptive Study of Significant Features of Exemplary Special Alternative Instructional Programs, The Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory (Los Alamitos, CA: 1991). This study was a descriptive one and did not assess program effectiveness. However, the nine programs identified as exemplary by the researchers were chosen based on (1) expert nomination; (2) evidence of positive student outcomes, such as gains in English proficiency and time for students to be mainstreamed; and (3) researchers' observations during visits to some of the nominated programs.

instruction. Districts we visited also said that they had insufficient resources to train teachers and develop or modify curricula as necessary to implement the promising approaches. Some officials noted, however, that for both bilingual and nonbilingual approaches, having models, better information about available instructional materials, and more technical assistance could help in adopting programs to better meet the needs of LEP students.

Federal Programs Support Important Activities, but Limited Funding Is Provided

Title VII of ESEA and EIEA provide funds to districts to help meet the needs of LEP students. Title VII also provides support at the state and national levels for many important types of activities to serve these students. Funding for these programs has not kept pace with the increase in eligible populations, however.

More than three-fourths of the $192 million appropriated for Title VII is used for grants to districts. The grants provide seed money, on a competitive basis, to help districts develop the capacity to provide programs for LEP students. About 1,000 projects were funded in 1992; grants are for 3 years with a possible extension of up to 5 years.[13]

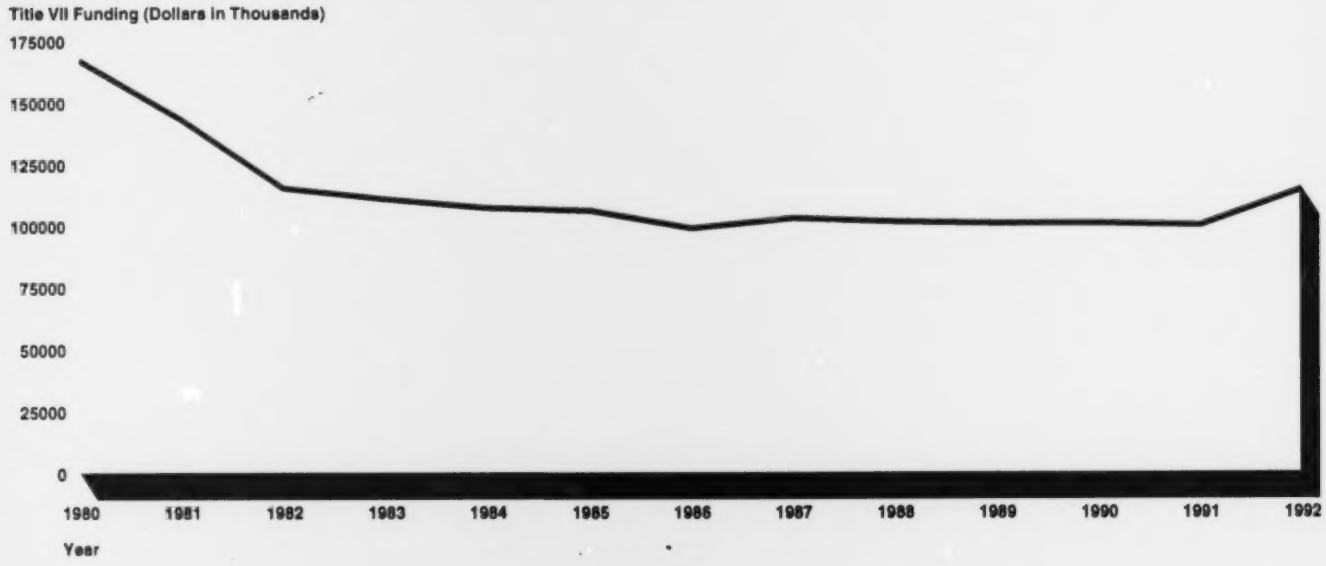
Title VII also funds many national and state activities under nine different programs. Activities funded under these programs range from graduate teaching fellowships to research. The activities address many of the difficulties districts face, including the shortage of trained teachers, the need for technical assistance, and the difficulties involved in making assessments, but the funding for each of these activities is a relatively small part of program funds. For example, less than 3 percent ($4.5 million) of Title VII's funds are used for dissemination activities.[14]

Funding for federal programs targeted to LEP students has not kept pace with this increasing student population. For example, when inflation is considered, the $192 million appropriated for Title VII in 1990 is 40 percent less than the 1980 appropriation, though Census data show the number of LEP students increased by more than 25 percent in those 10 years (see fig. 2).

[13]Districts can receive more than one grant. For example, they could receive grants for bilingual instructional programs and for alternative (nonbilingual) instructional programs. One of the districts we visited participated, or planned to participate, in eight different Title VII projects.

[14]Some other Title VII activities, such as technical assistance, also include the dissemination of information.

Figure 2: Title VII Funding Has Decreased, in Constant Dollars, Since 1980



The availability of federal funds for LEP students may increase, however, if changes in Chapter 1, recommended by several study groups, are implemented.[15] In 1993, about 35 percent of LEP students received services under Chapter 1.[16] But LEP students are eligible for Chapter 1 services only if their educational disadvantages stem from causes other than language. Several recent studies of Chapter 1 have recommended removing that restriction. Further, while some districts we visited provided Chapter 1 funds to some LEP students, others interpreted the provision to mean LEP students could not be served under Chapter 1. Department of Education officials have indicated that the distinction between limited English proficiency and other educational disadvantages is difficult, if not impossible, to make. The Department's reauthorization proposal also

[15]See Federal Education Programs for Limited-English-Proficient Students: A Blueprint for the Second Generation, Stanford Working Group (Stanford, CA: June 1993); Providing Chapter 1 Services to Limited English-Proficient Students, Westat (Rockville, MD: 1991); and Reinventing Chapter 1: The Current Chapter 1 Program and New Directions, U.S. Department of Education (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 1993).

[16]This figure compares to about 15 percent served under Title VII. Some students receive services under both Chapter 1 and Title VII.

recommends removing that restriction. Eliminating the restriction should allow more LEP students to be served under Chapter 1. Without increased Chapter 1 funding, however, fewer non-LEP students might receive Chapter 1 services.

Conclusions

It is difficult to see how many LEP students will achieve the high standards being developed and adopted to reach the national education goals given these students' educational and other needs and the limited services available to them. Increasingly, classroom teachers across the nation are facing the challenge of educating students with whom they cannot easily communicate because of language and cultural barriers. But districts will need substantial resources and expertise to make the curricular, instructional, and assessment changes that could help these students achieve high academic standards. In many cases, the most critical aspect in successfully implementing these changes will be training classroom teachers—whose college training often does not prepare them to deal with today's culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Therefore, we believe the nation needs to continue efforts to effectively serve LEP students in nonbilingual as well as bilingual settings, and developing a teaching force prepared to educate these students should be a top priority. Other critical needs include developing appropriate curricular and instructional models and necessary assessment tools and assisting states and districts in adapting them to local needs. Finally, efforts to improve education for LEP students should be consistent with any systemic reform efforts that districts and states implement to reach the national goals.

Agency Comments

In its November 17, 1993, written comments on a draft of this report (see app. III), the Department of Education indicated that the report provides a broad overview of major issues related to LEP students and key programs that serve them. The Department made technical comments, and we incorporated them as appropriate. The comments also raised questions about the report's discussion of the cost of programs for LEP students. In addition, the agency suggested providing information on its proposals to change Title VII.

The Department commented that the report does not fully develop the costs of programs for LEP students. It suggested that the report better link program costs to characteristics, such as variations in intensity and type of

services provided to LEP students with varied age, grade, and past educational background. In discussions concerning the draft, officials noted, for example, that, to fund some services for LEP students, districts might reallocate existing funds or increase efficiency in activities such as professional training. As noted in our scope and methodology, we did not attempt to compare the costs of bilingual and nonbilingual programs. Further, because of differences in districts' resources, expertise, and program scope and design, it is difficult to predict with any certainty the cost of implementing the nonbilingual approaches discussed in this report. However, we believe that evidence from the Department-funded study of exemplary programs, as well as information from the districts we visited, indicates that—especially when many of the nonbilingual approaches are integrated into a comprehensive program for which teachers are well trained—significant resources may be required. Whether those resources can be reallocated from existing funds or must come from outside sources depends, again, on individual district circumstances.

The Department has submitted proposed ESEA legislation that includes changes to Title VII. In discussions with officials about the Department's written comments, they described the proposed changes they see as most directly related to issues discussed in the report. Those key changes, officials said, would link LEP students to broader, systemic reform by (1) establishing schoolwide and districtwide grants, (2) strengthening the role of states, (3) allowing more flexibility in use of Chapter 1 funds, and (4) broadening staff development.

The Department has proposed establishing new types of grants that would replace the several different types of grants now available for districts. The proposed grants include schoolwide and districtwide grants which, over time, would predominate. To receive these grants, provided for 5 years, grantees would have to show how they plan to meet the needs of all LEP students, Department officials told us.[17] The state's role also would be strengthened. For example, the state would have to review applications and determine if grantees' plans are linked to the state's systemic reform plan. Linking LEP services to broader, systemic reform should help assure that these students participate in and benefit from such reform. At the same time, however, absent increased funding for Title VII, the number of

[17]The Department's proposed changes would require applications (1) for schoolwide grants, to describe how they would ensure that "all (or virtually all)" of the LEP students in the participating school would be served and (2) for districtwide grants, to describe how they would ensure that "a significant number" of LEP students in the participating district would be served. Currently, grants can be, and typically are, limited, for example, to specific grades or subjects and do not address the needs of all or most of the LEP students.

grants probably will decline because the scope of schoolwide and districtwide programs will be larger than the current typical Title VII grant.

The Department also proposed removing the restriction on LEP students' eligibility in Chapter 1 programs. Doing so provides greater flexibility in using these funds for LEP students and would allow more LEP students to participate in Chapter 1; but, as we pointed out, if Chapter 1 funding is not increased, fewer students who are not LEP may be served.

The final proposed change officials discussed would broaden the staff development that could be funded from Title VII. Grantees would be allowed to use funds for professional development of all staff, not just bilingual and ESL teachers; training, such as multicultural education, could be provided to mainstream teachers. This provision is consistent with findings in the Department-funded study: districts with exemplary programs for LEP students from many language groups did not limit staff development to those directly responsible for LEP student instruction. It is unclear, however, how the Department's proposed changes would significantly improve the supply of teachers trained to meet the needs of LEP students—whether in bilingual or nonbilingual settings—especially in preparing new teachers.

Appendix IV presents additional details on our observations. Appendix V presents a description of the students and programs in each of the five districts we visited. Appendix VI presents a description of our analysis of the Census data.

We are sending copies of this report to appropriate House and Senate committees, the Secretary of Education, and other interested parties. Copies will be made available to others on request.

Please call me on (202) 512-7014 if you or your staff have any questions. Other major contributors are listed in appendix VII.

Sincerely yours,

Linda G. Morra

Linda G. Morra
Director, Education
and Employment Issues

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Abbreviations

AFDC	Aid to Families With Dependent Children
ACP	Alternative Certification Program
EIEA	Emergency Immigrant Education Act
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESL	English as a Second Language
LEP	Limited English Proficient
SAIP	Special Alternative Instructional Program

Different Educational Strategies for Instructing Limited English Proficient Students

	Several basic strategies are used for instructing Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. In practice they often are combined in a variety of ways.
Transitional Bilingual Education	This is an instructional program in which subjects are taught in two languages—English and the native language of LEP students—and English is taught as a second language. Bilingual programs emphasize the development of English-language skills as well as grade promotion and graduation requirements. These programs are designed to enable LEP students to make a transition to an all-English program of instruction while receiving academic subject instruction in the native language to the extent necessary. Transitional bilingual education programs vary in the amount of native language instruction provided and the duration of the program.
Developmental Bilingual Programs	These are programs in which native-English-speaking and LEP students receive instruction in both English and the native language of the LEP students, with the goal of bilingual literacy for both groups.
English as a Second Language	This is a teaching approach in which LEP students are instructed in the use of the English language. Their instruction is based on a special curriculum that typically involves little or no use of their native language and is usually taught only in specific school periods. For the rest of the school day, the students may be placed in regular (or submersion) instruction, an immersion program, or a bilingual program.
Immersion	This is a general term for teaching approaches for LEP students that do not involve using a student's native language. Three variations are the following:
Sheltered English (Sheltered Subject Matter Teaching)	This method is characterized by using simplified vocabulary and sentence structure to facilitate understanding of the regular curriculum for LEP students. Teachers use slower, more concise speech, with increased wait time after posing questions. In addition, teachers make instruction more visual by using "realia" (objects and activities related to real life), manipulatives, pictures, and charts to define and demonstrate to provide comprehensible (visual/concrete) input.

Structured Immersion	This involves teaching in English, but it has several differences from submersion: the teacher understands the native language, and students may speak it to the teacher, although the teacher generally answers only in English. Knowledge of English is not assumed, and the curriculum is modified in vocabulary and pacing, so that the academic subjects will be understood. Some programs include some language arts teaching in the native language.
Submersion	This involves placing LEP students in ordinary classrooms in which English is the language of instruction. Students receive no special programs to help them overcome their language barriers, and their native language is not used in the classroom. Also called "sink or swim," submersion was found unconstitutional in the Supreme Court's decision in Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974).

Languages Spoken by LEP Students in Five Districts Visited, School Year 1991-92

Language/country of origin	District A	B	C	D	E
Albanian/Albania				•	
Amharic/Ethiopia			•	•	
Arabic/Saudi Arabia, Yemen	•	•	•	•	•
Armenian/Armenia			•	•	•
Assamese/India				•	
Assyrian/Syria, Iraq					•
Bahaoa/Malaysia			•		
Baluchi/Iran				•	
Basque/Spain			•		
Bengali/Bangladesh			•	•	
Bulgarian/Bulgaria			•	•	
Burmese/Burma (Myanmar)				•	•
Cantonese/China			•		•
Cebuano/Philippines, Cebu			•		
Chinese (unspecified dialect)/China	•	•		•	
Choctaw/American Indian			•		
Croatian/Croatia			•		•
Czech/Czech Republic		•	•	•	
Danish/Denmark			•		
Dari/Afghanistan				•	
Digueno/American Indian			•		
Dutch/Netherlands			•		•
Efik/Nigeria			•		
Ethiopian/Ethiopia			•		
Ewe/Africa			•	•	
Farsi/Iran			•		•
Finnish/Finland			•		
French/France			•	•	•
French Creole/Haiti, United States		•	•	•	
Fulani/Nigeria				•	
Garfuno/Africa			•		
German/Germany		•	•	•	•
Greek/Greece		•	•	•	•
Guamanian/Guam					•
Gujarati/India			•	•	
Gypsy/Moldova, Hungary			•		
Hainanese/China			•		

(continued)

Appendix II
Languages Spoken by LEP Students in Five Districts Visited, School Year 1991-92

Language/country of origin	District A	B	C	D	E
Haitian Creole/Haiti				•	
Hebrew/Israel			•	•	•
Hindi/India			•	•	•
Hmong/Laos			•		•
Hokkien/Taiwan			•		
Hungarian/Hungary			•	•	•
Ibo/Nigeria			•		
Ilocano/Philippines			•	•	
Ilongo/Philippines			•		
Indonesian/Indonesia			•	•	•
Italian/Italy			•	•	•
Iu Mien/China, Laos			•		
Japanese/Japan	•		•	•	•
Khmer/Kampucea (Cambodia)	•	•	•		•
Khmu/Laos			•		
Kimeru/Africa			•		
Kiswahili/Africa			•		
Korean/Korea			•	•	•
Kpelle/Liberia				•	
Lahu/Thailand, Laos			•		
Lao/Laos	•	•	•		•
Lao Lamet/Laos			•		
Laotian-Mien/Laos					•
Lingala/Africa			•		
Macedonian/Macedonia				•	
Malay/Malaysia				•	
Malaysian/Malaysia			•		
Malayalam/India				•	
Mandarin/China			•		•
Marathi/India				•	
Mixtico/Mexico			•		
Navajo/American Indian			•		
Nepali/Nepal				•	
Nigerian/Nigeria			•		
Norwegian/Norway			•		
Palavan/Indonesia			•		
Pampango/Philippines			•		
Pangosinan/Philippines			•		

(continued)

Language/country of origin	District A	B	C	D	E
Pashto/Afghanistan				•	
Philippino (Tagalog)/Philippines			•	•	•
Polish/Poland		•	•	•	•
Portuguese/Portugal			•	•	•
Puma/Burma (Myanmar)			•		
Punjabi/India			•	•	•
Romanian/Romania			•	•	•
Russian/Russia		•	•	•	•
Samarena/Philippines			•		
Samoan/Samoa			•		•
Sapoteco/Philippines			•		
Seneca/American Indian				•	
Serbian/Serbia			•		•
Serbo-Croatian/Yugoslavia			•	•	
Seri/Mexico				•	
Sindhi/Pakistan, India				•	
Slovak/Slovenia				•	
Somali/Somalia			•	•	
Spanish/Mexico, Spain	•	•	•	•	•
Swahili/Ethiopia			•		
Swedish/Sweden			•		
Syrian/Syria			•		
Taiwanese/Taiwan			•		
Tamil/India			•	•	
Telugu/India			•	•	
Teo Chow/China			•		
Thai/Thailand			•	•	•
Tigre/Ethiopia				•	
Tigrinya/Ethiopia			•		
Tongan/Samoa			•		
Turkish/Turkey			•	•	•
Ukranian/Ukraine			•	•	
Urdu/Pakistan, India			•	•	•
Vietnamese/Vietnam	•	•	•	•	•
Visayan/Philippines			•		
Yonba/Nigeria				•	
Yoruba/Africa			•		
Totals	**7[a]**	**12[b]**	**88**	**57**	**37[c]**

(Table notes on next page)

Note: We designated the districts as A, B, C, D, and E.

[a]District A reported having 60 other languages, but documents specifying those languages were not easily retrievable, district officials reported. About 94 percent of the district's LEP population spoke Spanish. About 2,400 LEP students spoke other languages.

[b]District B reported having students that spoke one other language but could not identify it.

[c]District E reported an unknown number of other languages, including dialects from the Philippines.

Comments From the U.S. Department of Education

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND MINORITY LANGUAGES AFFAIRS

NOV 17 [illegible]

Ms. Linda G. Morra
Director, Education and Employment Issues
Human Resources Division
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Morra:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the GAO draft report, "Limited English Proficiency: A Growing and Costly Educational Challenge Facing Many School Districts" (GAO/HRD-94-38), transmitted to the Department of Education on October 25, 1993.

The report provides a broad overview of the major issues related to limited English proficient (LEP) students in American schools and programs available to local school districts under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), Title VII and other programs for serving these students. In almost all aspects it is both accurate and informative.

The Department offers the following minor technical comments for consideration when preparing the final report:

- The title of the report implies that issues of cost are as intensively addressed as issues of growth. However, the report primarily addresses the latter type of issues. Because cost issues represent a very complex area and because issues of cost are minimally addressed, GAO might consider changing the title to reflect the facts described in the report. We suggest the following title: The Growing Educational Challenge Facing Many School Districts.

- The report could provide a better description of the type of education that LEP students are or are not receiving. We suggest a description that uses the following continuum of services: At one end no special services for LEP students; English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction; content-based ESL services; bilingual education programs with a focus on English lapguage arts education, content instruction and use of the native language in the middle; and bilingual education programs with a focus on English and native

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language arts education and content instruction at the other end. Such an addition would provide a more comprehensive description of how schools are meeting the challenge of educating LEP students. If a continuum of services is established, the GAO report might have an easier time in describing cost issues in relation to intensity and type of services provided to LEP students with varied age, grade, and past educational background characteristics. Without this information, the reader is left with interpretations that can not be put into context.

Now on p. 3.

- The description, set out in the first full paragraph of page 4 of the main body of the report, of the programs authorized by Title VII could be more specific. In order to resolve this problem, we suggest the following revisions to the second and third sentences of that paragraph to read as follows:

  The stated policy of the act is to support educational programs that help to ensure both English language proficiency and academic achievement for language minority students. The Act provides about $190 million for (A) financial assistance to LEA programs that serve LEP students, (2) data collection, evaluation, and research, and (3) training and technical assistance.

Now on p. 40, app. IV.

- The text on page 9, Appendix III is confusing. The report might clarify what is meant by "non-bilingual approaches." It appears that the report means to describe instructional approaches that are not primarily language-dependent. If this is the case, the title might be changed to "Promising Approaches That Do Not Use Native Language Instruction." In addition, the basis for attributing these approaches to sheltered English approaches as noted in the footnote on page 10, Appendix III is not clear. The approaches are part of many programs used to teach LEP students English, the native language, and/or core curricula.

Now on p. 40, app. IV.

Now on p. 47.

- Page 17, 3rd paragraph, refers to Title VII-funded dissemination activities. This discussion should be amplified. The Department funds a number of different "dissemination" activities, and the Academic Excellence Program is but one of them. The Department funds, for example, the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education and 16 Multifunctional Resource Centers which also disseminate information about Title VII programs and about bilingual education. In addition, on page 17, it is important to describe the different activities funded under Title VII.

Now on p. 47.

Now on p. 47, app. IV.

- Page 17, Appendix III does not include a complete description of the programs and activities funded under

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Part B and Part C of Title VII. These programs represent smaller amounts than the expenditures for Part A principally because the thrust of Title VII is to help local education agencies (LEAs) to build their capacity to operate programs of instruction for LEP students. Part B and Part C funds support other activities. For example, Title VII supports 16 Multifunctional Resource Centers and the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education in addition to the Evaluation Assistance Centers described on page 17.

Now on p. 47.

It would be helpful to the reader if the report contained a synopsis of the Administration's proposed amendments to the ESEA that affect the subject of this report. The reader might better understand how some or all of the problems regarding the services provided to LEP students described in the report are addressed in the Secretary's proposals.

If we can provide additional assistance, please feel free to contact me at (202) 205-5082.

Sincerely,

Eugene E. Garcia
Director

Increasing Numbers of LEP Students Pose Significant Challenges for Many Districts

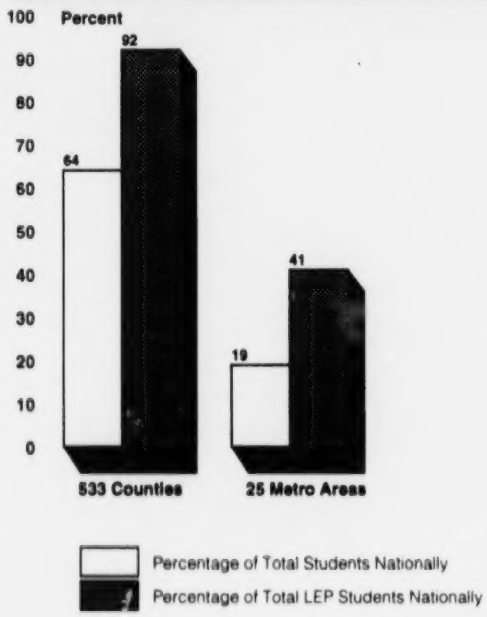
The following sections provide details concerning the (1) numbers and characteristics of LEP students, (2) instructional programs for LEP students in the districts we visited—focusing on the extent of bilingual instruction, (3) promising nonbilingual approaches that have been used to educate LEP students, and (4) key federal programs targeted to LEP students.

Numbers and Characteristics of LEP Students

Census data show that 72 percent of all LEP students are from six states—California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas—and in the last decade, 41 states experienced an increase in the number of LEP students. Almost every state has local concentrations of LEP students.

LEP students are also concentrated in selected counties—533 counties in 47 states have substantial numbers of LEP students—and in large metropolitan areas. In 1990, the 533 counties accounted for about 64 percent of all students but more than 91 percent of all LEP students. Likewise, the nation's 25 largest metropolitan areas accounted for about 20 percent of all students but about 42 percent of all LEP students. (See fig. IV.1.)

Figure IV.1: LEP Students Are Concentrated in Selected Counties and Metropolitan Areas



These students are culturally and linguistically diverse. Nationally, more than half of the counties with substantial numbers of LEP students had at least five languages represented. In the districts we visited, the numbers were even higher, with between 13 and 88 languages represented among the student populations. In many cases, students from many different language backgrounds were in the same classroom.

Census data also show that in 1990 about 43 percent of all LEP students were immigrants. In the 533 counties, on average, 8 percent of students were immigrants, compared with the national average of about 5 percent. These counties accounted for 95 percent of all immigrant students nationally. Likewise, the 25 largest metropolitan areas accounted for 46 percent of all immigrant students.

LEP students represent a growing proportion of students. Nationally, in 1990, LEP students made up about 5.2 percent of all students, up from about 3.9 percent in 1980. In the 533 counties, however, the proportion was greater; LEP students represented, on average, about 7.4 percent of

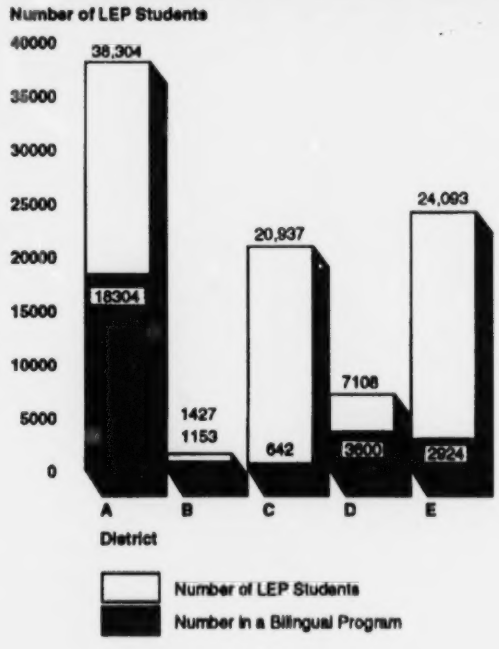
students in 1990, up from 5.8 percent in 1980. Likewise, in the 25 largest metropolitan areas, LEP students made up about 11 percent of the population, up from about 9 percent in 1980.

The growth in numbers and proportion of LEP populations was more dramatic in the districts we visited. For example, in one district, the percentage of LEP students increased from 7 to 28 percent during the 1980s. Fueled mostly by immigrants, overall student enrollment rose by almost 60 percent. The number of Asians increased from approximately 1,600 in 1982 to more than 15,000 in 1992, accounting for 21 percent of total student enrollment.

Instructional Programs for LEP Students

The districts we visited were often unable to provide full bilingual instruction in academic subjects for many of their LEP students. (See fig. IV.2.) The percentage of students in such programs ranged from 3 percent in one of the largest districts we visited to about 81 percent in the smallest. In the smallest district, however, an additional 14 percent of LEP students were in pullout bilingual programs and received native language support for only a small portion of the day; further, in that district, about half of the bilingual teachers did not meet all state certification requirements.

Figure IV.2: Bilingual Instruction Was Provided to Varying Portion of LEP Students in the Five Districts Visited



One major difficulty in providing bilingual instruction was the many low-incidence languages, that is, languages spoken by relatively few students dispersed across a district. Limited availability of bilingual teachers and materials was also a problem, however, even for high-incidence languages, that is, languages spoken by many students.

Many Low-Incidence Languages

In each district we visited, the number and mix of students made providing bilingual instruction in academic subjects to some students impractical. As many as 88 languages were represented, many of which were low-incidence languages. Students from any one language could be spread across many grades and schools; these students could significantly differ in English language proficiency, native language literacy, and academic subject knowledge. For example, one district had more than 900 Vietnamese LEP students enrolled in many grades in 71 schools. In another district, one school had 56 Vietnamese students enrolled in seven different grades and an additional 38 LEP students who spoke 11 other languages.

One way of overcoming the problem of low-incidence languages might be to consolidate the students in a single school, allowing more efficient use of the limited number of bilingual teachers. However, comments by some district officials indicate that this solution may not always be possible. For example, students may be too geographically spread out, or parents may object to busing students across town. This approach could make it more difficult to involve parents also, since families would not necessarily live near their child's school.

Bilingual Teachers Hard to Find

School and district officials consistently cited the shortage of bilingual teachers as a primary reason for not providing bilingual instruction. Although estimates vary on how many additional bilingual teachers are needed to meet the current nationwide demand, many experts agree that a shortage exists. The National Education Association estimates that 175,000 additional bilingual teachers are needed. Likewise, a recent California Department of Education study cites the need for about 22,000 bilingual teachers in California alone and predicts significant difficulty in filling that need.

Many reasons exist for the shortage. In some cases, students speak languages not historically represented in this country; teachers speaking these languages have been especially hard to find. For example, one district we visited had more than 7,000 Hmong students, but it could not provide bilingual education for any of these students. According to a state official, only one certified Hmong bilingual teacher lived in the state. Some of the districts noted that one source of bilingual teachers could be immigrants who were teachers in their native countries. However, these immigrants sometimes could not be fully certified to teach because they could not pass the English portion of a state teacher certification test or lacked a U.S. college degree. At one district we visited, some of these immigrants were teaching under a waiver of state requirements.

Difficulties in providing instruction exist even for the high-incidence languages. For example, some districts made rather extensive efforts to recruit Spanish bilingual teachers—including going to Spain and Puerto Rico—but still lacked adequate numbers of these teachers. In addition, in one district we visited, more than 90 teachers who had been certified in bilingual instruction had opted not to teach in a bilingual program. This circumstance may have been because the district could not pay stipends to bilingual teachers; some teachers said that they were not being sufficiently

compensated for what they considered to be the considerable extra workload faced in the bilingual classroom.

Department of Education officials pointed to other difficulties in finding bilingual teachers. They noted that in some cases districts do not have the funds to pay for the teachers who are available or do not have open teaching positions available. They also noted that, even if districts are successful in recruiting bilingual teachers from other countries, these teachers must receive training in areas such as U.S. culture and teaching approaches for them to be effective in U.S. schools.

Bilingual Instructional Materials Hard to Find

Officials said that finding quality instructional materials in most languages was very difficult. District and school officials noted that only recently have quality Spanish materials become available. For example, in one state, Spanish textbooks that parallel the state's curricula are now available. However, numerous officials said that obtaining textbooks in some high-incidence languages, particularly the Southeast Asian languages, is very difficult. Officials believe that publishers do not develop materials in the Southeast Asian languages because there is not a big enough market to make it cost effective.

Several of the districts have adapted or developed their own native language materials. One district obtained Spanish materials from Puerto Rico and Cuba and modified them to meet its curricula. At another district, officials told us that the Khmer (Cambodian) students use ditto sheets developed by the Khmer staff. These materials, however, do not look as appealing as published textbooks in English and, officials believed, this lesser quality was detrimental to students' self-image. Officials in another district with many Southeast Asian students noted that, although some districts with similar student populations have developed materials in Southeast Asian languages, these materials sometimes have limited usefulness because information presented is not always relevant to the district's curricula.

Assessment of Language Proficiency and Academic Achievement Was Limited

The districts were also limited in their ability to assess LEP students' language proficiency and academic achievement. Many experts believe that districts need to accurately assess both aspects of students' abilities to provide LEP students with appropriate instruction.[1]

[1]Recommendations for Improving the Assessment and Monitoring of Students with Limited English Proficiency, Council of Chief State School Officers, State Education Assessment Center and Resource Center on Educational Equity (Washington, D.C.: 1992).

Assessment of English language proficiency is important for determining the appropriate level of English language assistance. Experts say that it is necessary to assess English language proficiency frequently so that activities involving the appropriate degree of language difficulty are used. These assessments also determine when students are considered sufficiently fluent to succeed in an all-English class and be "graduated" from ESL and other special programs. Several of the districts we visited assessed students only annually to determine program eligibility. In addition, to allow room for new arrivals, one district sometimes graduated students from ESL before they were proficient in English. Native language proficiency, as well as English language proficiency, may affect students' ability to learn both academic subjects and English, many experts believe. Districts had limited ability to assess native language proficiency, however. Several made attempts to do so, especially to test oral proficiency, if teachers or community volunteers who spoke the languages were available.

Assessment of academic achievement is needed for placing students in appropriate academic instructional settings and for monitoring progress in academic subjects. For languages other than English and Spanish, written, standardized tests are not available to assess achievement in academic subjects. Some districts used community members who spoke a student's native language to conduct oral assessments in academic subjects when the student first enrolled, but little or no additional assessment could be done until the student became sufficiently proficient in English to take the standardized tests used for English-speaking students. Although several districts were looking to new types of assessments that rely less on language, such as teacher observations and portfolios that contain a variety of student work, the districts had not yet implemented them.[2]

[2]These new types of assessments are expected to play a large role in systemic reform, even where there are no LEP students. Developing these assessments and training teachers to use them effectively, both to measure individual student achievement and overall program success, can take time, however.

Promising Nonbilingual Approaches Used to Provide Academic Instruction

Key Nonbilingual Approaches Include Changes in Instruction and Curricula

To teach LEP students, several approaches have been developed. Instruction is changed to (1) include the use of pictures, charts, and realia (objects and activities related to real life); (2) check frequently for student comprehension and, if necessary, slow the pacing of questions and answers; and (3) allow a variety of student response modes—written, pictorial, and translation by other students. Often, teachers also use other instructional techniques, such as cooperative learning and peer tutoring, in which students help each other.

Curricula for academic subjects are also modified to make them more comprehensible. For example, a district's existing curricula would be modified to focus on the major concepts involved in each subject or lesson. One official cited, for example, a class on Native American cultures. This class would cover all of the major concepts included in the state and district curricula, but might do so by using the histories and customs of only a few tribes as examples, as opposed to mainstream classes, which would cover many more tribes. Another type of modification might be to provide vocabulary development for the major concepts early in each lesson.[3]

Another approach is encouraging the students to use their native languages, even when teachers do not speak these languages. For example, groups of students who speak the same language can work together on a project, supporting each other in understanding concepts; students can be encouraged to read books in their native languages;[4] and instructional aides fluent in students' native languages can provide assistance.

[3]Many of these instructional curricular approaches are associated with the Sheltered English model of instruction—also called Sheltered Subject Matter Teaching. Department of Education officials noted that these approaches may also be used with other instructional strategies, such as ESL, or instruction in the student's native language.

[4]One expert we spoke to emphasized the importance of students' reading such materials to develop literacy, but noted that often LEP students are poor and do not have reading materials available to them in their homes.

Figure IV.3 is an outline of key activities in a fourth grade life-science lesson, designed for a class with LEP students from many language backgrounds. The lesson is part of a series that (1) identifies key topics organized around main themes and (2) uses "student-centered" techniques, for example, hands-on activities, allowing students to respond in their native languages and allowing time for students to interact before responding.

During the lesson, the teacher also uses a variety of techniques to make the discussion more comprehensible, including clear enunciation, controlled vocabulary, and limited use of idiomatic speech. In addition, the teacher uses contextual clues—such as gestures, facial expressions, visuals, and props. Finally, the teacher checks frequently for understanding through questions or other student-teacher interaction.

Figure IV.3: Lesson Using Promising Nonbilingual Approaches

Objective	The objective of the lesson is to understand that living things adapt to survive.
Motivation	Students begin by picking up colored pieces of yarn that are on the floor; some pieces match the color of the rug. Students then work in groups of four to discuss how the color that matches the rug acts as camouflage.
Input	The teacher writes the definition of adaptation on the board; while showing students a book with pictures of "hidden animals," the teacher asks them to volunteer examples of the adaptation.
Checking for Understanding	Each group is given two pictures that demonstrate different kinds of adaptations and cards that have those adaptations written on them–for example, color, size, shape. Each student then identifies for his or her partner in the group the kind of adaptation in one of the pictures.
Guided Practice	The discussion continues with the entire class; as the teacher names a kind of adaptation, the students with those pictures stand and explain how their pictures depict that adaptation.
Closure	The teacher gives each group of students a set of pictures, cut from magazines, with various adaptations represented. Each group discusses the pictures and reaches consensus to identify and record the kind of adaptation in each one.
Independent Practice and Extension	Choral poetry; poems pertinent to subject.

Study Identifies Exemplary Nonbilingual Programs

A study by the Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory suggests that these nonbilingual approaches hold promise for instructing LEP students, although the study does not assess program effectiveness. Researchers identified nine districts nationwide with exemplary Special Alternative Instructional Programs—programs that are alternatives to traditional bilingual programs because instruction is delivered primarily in English. Researchers identified these nine exemplary programs through a rigorous process that started with expert nominations and included a review of

outcome data. Each SAIP provided evidence of success, including evidence of students' acquired English language proficiency and, in some cases, evidence of academic success in the specific subjects that the program focused on. Researchers' site visit observations identified other evidence of success, for example, high levels of student activity and involvement in the instructional program, a factor research has associated with academic success.

The study was designed to be descriptive, however, and did not directly address the question of program effectiveness. For example, it did not use control groups, that is, it did not compare outcomes, such as achievement test scores, of students in these SAIPs with those for similar students not enrolled in such programs. Also, the study concluded that more research is needed to determine if specific features found to be common among the exemplary SAIPs can operate effectively without the others. Some of the program and instructional features common among the exemplary SAIPs included coordination of services, extensive use of students' native languages (usually by students), small class size (generally below 20), and wide use of instructional practices found in research literature to be characteristic of effective instruction—generally for all students and specifically for LEP students. The study report specifically noted that the features operated interactively in the exemplary SAIPs and cautioned against focusing on individual features.

Implementing Promising Approaches May Be Difficult

The findings of the study of exemplary SAIPs, as well as experiences in the districts we visited, indicate that implementing the promising nonbilingual approaches may require significant effort.

Study Suggests Significant Effort Needed to Implement Promising Approaches

The key instructional practices employed by the exemplary SAIPs were consistent with the promising nonbilingual approaches discussed above. In addition, though the exemplary sites varied, they all had characteristics common to the districts we visited, including student populations speaking diverse languages. The experiences of these SAIPs, therefore, may provide significant insights into difficulties that districts such as those we visited might have in implementing similar programs.

Teacher training was a critical feature in all of the SAIPs. Each recruited experienced bilingual and ESL teachers to help develop the instructional program and teach in it. However, academic teachers taught the academic classes. The study indicated that training for these teachers was extensive.

Finding time for teachers to be trained, providing follow-up support and coaching by more experienced teachers, and employing substitutes for teachers in training is expensive. Yet, officials at one of the exemplary SAIPs said that, without significant amounts of training, teachers will not be adequately prepared for, and may not support, the necessary instructional changes.

Districts may also need outside help in developing and implementing the promising approaches. Each of the SAIPs, for example, obtained outside funding to help finance its efforts. In addition, officials at the two exemplary SAIPs we visited noted that outside consultants were an important factor in designing and implementing the programs.

Districts may also need models and technical assistance to implement programs efficiently. Study findings and conclusions suggest that each district must design a program unique to its circumstances and cannot directly adopt one of the exemplary program models. But having a model—a place to start—can be very useful, according to officials that we spoke to in other districts. These districts had implemented programs based on those of other districts, including one of the exemplary SAIPs. Having both the model and the on-site technical assistance provided by the exemplary SAIP staff, the officials said, was extremely valuable in expediting program implementation.

The study also identified other characteristics that were common to the exemplary SAIPs that may not exist in some other districts. Chief among them are strong leadership, a history of prior programs for LEP students, and a history of extensive staff development efforts.

Districts Visited Making Only Limited Progress

Districts we visited were aware of the promising nonbilingual approaches but had not been able to implement them very extensively. In some cases, the districts had thousands of LEP students in need of educational support. In one district, for example, the number of LEP students had been increasing rapidly throughout the decade; in 1992, 72 percent—about 15,000—of the LEP students were taught by teachers not certified in ESL or bilingual education. Changing curricula and training teachers to serve that many students could take considerable time.

One district, at one of its high schools, had recently developed and implemented a Sheltered English curriculum for science, history, and math. Doing so, however, took considerable effort and time. Although the officials hoped to implement similar programs at other schools, they were

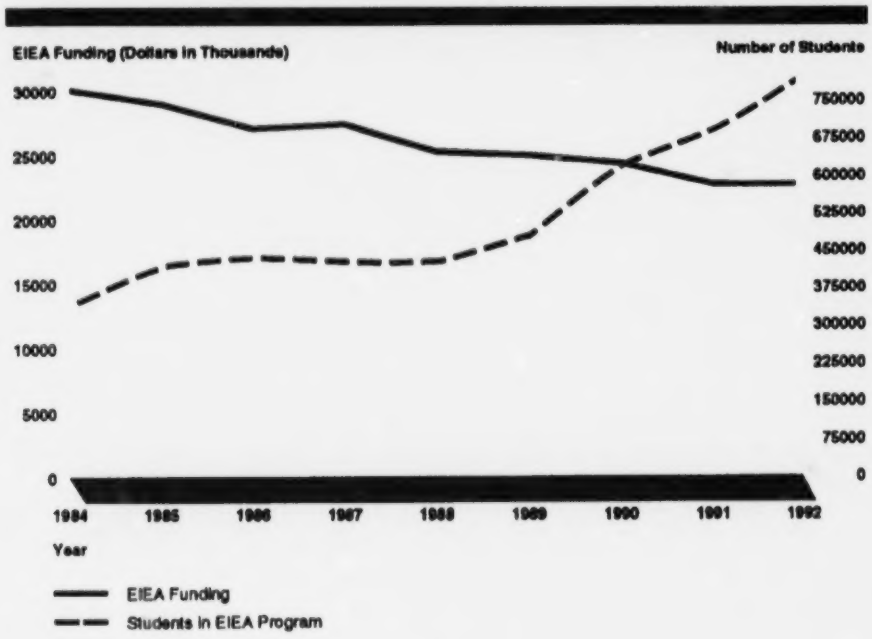
uncertain about when they would have sufficient resources to do so. Another district, to help meet the needs of LEP students, had begun providing training to academic subject teachers. The district planned to give each teacher about 15 hours of training during 1 school year, covering a variety of subjects, including language acquisition and cultural sensitivity. After 1 year, most of the elementary teachers had been trained, and the teachers in the secondary schools were to be trained next. But this training is significantly less intensive than the study of exemplary SAIPs suggests is necessary.

Districts we visited also said that they had insufficient resources to train teachers and develop or modify curricula as necessary to implement new approaches. Officials in some of these districts echoed the comments of the districts assisted by the exemplary SAIPs and other districts, noting that having models and better information about available instructional materials—for both bilingual and nonbilingual approaches—as well as more technical assistance, could help them adapt programs to better meet the needs of their LEP students.

Federal Programs Targeted to LEP Students

Funding for federal programs targeted to LEP students has not kept pace with this increasing student population. For example, when inflation is considered, 1990 funding for Title VII was 40 percent less than 1980 funding. Likewise, although annual appropriations have remained relatively constant since passage of the Emergency Immigrant Education Act in 1984, when adjusted for inflation, funding has declined while the number of immigrants has grown (see fig. IV.4). Average funding per student under the program has decreased from $86 in 1984 to $29 in 1992.

Figure IV.4: EIEA Funding Declined, in Constant Dollars, While Number of Immigrants Increased Since 1984



In addition to grants to help districts meet local needs, Title VII funds many national and state activities under nine different programs. Activities funded address many of the difficulties districts face, including the shortage of trained teachers, the need for technical assistance, and the problems involved in doing assessments, but the funding is limited. The following are examples of important types of activities funded under Title VII that receive relatively limited levels of funding:[5]

- Training for teachers, administrators, and parents: Funds are provided for graduate teacher fellowships; for institutions of higher education to train teachers to teach LEP students; and for resource centers to provide training and technical assistance to those participating, or planning to participate, in programs for LEP students. These activities account for about 19 percent ($36 million) of Title VII funding.

[5]The list is not a full description of Title VII state and national activities, and, in some cases, activities could overlap. For example, resource centers can disseminate information as part of training and technical assistance. Districts may also use some of their grant funds for related activities, especially teacher training.

- Dissemination: Funds are provided, for example, under the Academic Excellence Program, to districts identified by the Department of Education as having exemplary programs for LEP students; these districts then provide information and technical assistance to help other "adopter" districts implement similar programs. Funds are also provided for a clearinghouse to collect, analyze, and disseminate information about bilingual education and related programs. These activities account for less than 3 percent ($4.5 million) of Title VII's funds.
- Evaluation assistance: Funds are provided for two centers responsible for developing methods for identifying and evaluating the academic achievement and educational progress of LEP students in the federal grant projects. These centers have about 15 staff to assist more than 850 Title VII projects nationwide. The centers' staff typically assist districts by giving information at technical conferences and by providing telephone assistance in place of directly visiting all districts receiving Title VII funds. Funding for the centers is about $1.5 million, less than 1 percent of Title VII funds.

LEP Students and Instructional Programs in the Five Districts GAO Visited

Introduction

We visited five school districts, which we designated as Districts A-E, that served relatively high numbers of LEP students from numerous language backgrounds. Through these visits, we obtained detailed information on (1) how the districts were educating these students and (2) what challenges they faced in doing so. We selected districts that had high numbers or percentages of LEP students from at least 10 language backgrounds. Each district we visited was located in an urban area with a large concentration of immigrant and LEP students. The districts were geographically dispersed, and they differed in the ethnic mix of their immigrant students and in the size of their total enrollment (ranging from 12,000 to 200,000 students).

How We Selected Districts and Gathered Data

We selected the districts using a database on immigrant and LEP students from our earlier study on how school districts use Emergency Immigrant Education Act funds.[1] In that study, we surveyed districts that received EIEA funding to determine, among other things, the number of immigrant students enrolled in the nation's schools, the number of those students who were LEP, and the language backgrounds represented. We identified more than 500 districts nationwide that either had immigrant students that made up at least 3 percent of total enrollment or had at least 500 immigrant students—the criterion for receiving EIEA funding. We found that 40 percent of these districts had students from at least 15 diverse language backgrounds.

At each of the five districts in this study, we spoke to the superintendent or the assistant superintendent, the director of the program for LEP students, and other district officials, such as the director of the finance office and those responsible for managing federal programs. We also visited several schools in each district, including both elementary and secondary schools. Although we observed selected classes and spoke with some teachers in each school, our observations were insufficient (1) to confirm or deny that teaching practices paralleled those described by district officials or (2) to assess the quality of instruction.

[1]Our earlier report, in accordance with EIEA, defined an "immigrant student" as one who was foreign born and had attended school in the United States for less than 3 years. We defined "LEP student" to be consistent with Title VII, which defines an LEP student as one who (1) is foreign born or has a native language other than English; (2) comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or (3) is an American Indian or Alaskan Native and comes from an environment in which a language other than English has significantly affected his or her English proficiency, and, therefore, may have difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English that would deny the student the opportunity to learn in a class where English is the language of instruction. These definitions are not those used in our analysis of Census data, as described in appendix VI. See Immigrant Education: Information on the Emergency Immigrant Education Act Program (GAO/HRD-91-50, Mar. 15, 1991).

Type of Data We Gathered and Present

We requested data from district officials in several key areas, including immigrant enrollments; LEP enrollments; number of LEP students served by each type of instructional program, for example, bilingual and Sheltered English; average time it took students to be reclassified to fully English proficient; drop-out rates; number of certified ESL and bilingual teachers; type and extent of staff development and teacher training; and district poverty rates. Data were requested for selected school years between 1981 and 1982 and 1991 and 1992, but districts often did not have data readily available or in a format that allowed comparison of LEP students with other students. In addition, district data varied, for example, in the time periods covered. In some cases where data were not available, estimates were obtained. We did not independently verify the data.

For each district, we describe the (1) changing demographics in the last 10 years; (2) challenges posed by immigrant and LEP students; (3) services provided, including (a) extent to which native language instruction and nonbilingual instruction are provided and (b) methods used to assess the language proficiency and achievement levels of LEP students; and (4) major federal funding sources targeted specifically to immigrant and LEP students. Much of this information was based on discussions with district officials, school officials, and teachers.

LEP Students and Programs in District A

Demographics

From 1982 to 1992, this district's student population remained relatively constant, going from 193,701 to 197,413 students. However, student ethnicity changed dramatically during the same period. For example, Hispanic students replaced African-American students as the largest ethnic group, almost doubling in number. The number and percentage of white and Asian students decreased. According to the District Superintendent, immigrant Asian families have moved to the suburbs. (See table V.1 for these changes.)

Table V.1: Changes in Ethnicity of District A Population

	1982		1992	
Ethnicity	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	44,551	23	26,848	14
Hispanic	46,488	24	91,797	47
African American	85,229	44	73,240	37
Asian	5,811	3	5,330	3
American Indian	1,936	<1	198	<1
Other[a]	9,686	5	0	0
Total	**193,701**	**100**	**197,413**	**100[b]**

[a]Ethnicity data not available.

[b]Over 100 percent due to rounding.

In 1991-1992, foreign-born students represented 11 percent—more than 22,000 students—of District A's total population. These students came from approximately 115 different countries, but the majority were from Mexico. During the last 4 years, approximately 12,000 Mexican-born students entered District A's schools annually. The district also had a large number of students from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Vietnam.

During the last decade, District A's LEP population grew from 12 percent to 20 percent. The district's LEP students were predominately Spanish speaking, with 37,194 Spanish speakers out of a total 39,569 LEP population. Since 1982, the number of Spanish-speaking LEP students increased by 80 percent. The remaining LEP students were linguistically diverse, representing 66 different languages. However, the number of these non-Spanish-speaking LEP students decreased by 21 percent during the 10-year period. (See table V.2 for the number and percentage of LEP students by language.)

Table V.2: Languages Spoken by LEP Students in District A

	1982		1992	
Language	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Spanish	21,018	87	37,194	94
Vietnamese	1,007	4	847	2
Chinese	168	<1	79	<1
Khmer (Cambodian)	223	<1	33	<1
Laotian	156	<1	12	<1
Other[a]	1,449	6	1,404	4
Total	**24,021**	**100[b]**	**39,569**	**100[c]**

[a]Data on the number of other languages in 1982 are not available. In 1992, the district reported 62 other languages.

[b]Under 100 percent due to rounding.

[c]Over 100 percent due to rounding.

During the last decade, the district reported that the students receiving free or reduced-price lunches increased from 41 percent to 55 percent. Several school officials noted that most LEP and immigrant students were poor and received such lunches. According to a school principal, many poor immigrant and LEP students also lived in crowded, multiple-family dwellings that were not conducive to studying.

Challenges Posed

District A administrators, school officials, and teachers described several challenges faced in educating immigrant and LEP students, as well as ways in which the district was attempting to meet some of these challenges.

Many immigrant students arrived with limited schooling and were often illiterate in their native languages. Students represented many levels of academic preparedness and proficiency in both their native languages and in English. One sixth grade teacher said, for example, that in the last 2 years, a few of his students were illiterate in both English and Spanish.

Many immigrant and LEP students were highly transient. Immigrant students of all ages entered District A throughout the year. About five new immigrant students, one elementary school principal noted, enrolled in the school every month. She also stated that many immigrant and LEP children were poor, and their families tended to move frequently, sometimes monthly. In addition, according to a school principal, a few of these

families returned to their homelands for extended visits, disrupting students' education.

Involving parents in the education of their children has proven difficult. Whenever possible, District A provides interpreters: At four assessment centers, where immigrant students were registered and tested for enrollment, a Spanish interpreter was on staff to assist parents; interpreters in Chinese, French, Khmer, Laotian, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Urdu may be obtained from local volunteer groups on an on-call basis. At the schools, interpreters may be obtained from local volunteer groups.

Some schools reported making progress in involving parents. At one school, parents volunteered to work at a student store where students purchased rewards for good attendance and good grades. This school held an annual awards ceremony to thank parents who volunteered during the year. Another school held a parent involvement day four times a year. This school notified parents of upcoming events by having students call them at home, printing notices on local stores' grocery bags, and broadcasting the news on Spanish radio and television stations. When possible, the school obtained Laotian and Vietnamese translators from the community to help communicate with parents, but translators were not provided to many Asian parents because few bilingual Asian translators were available.

According to district and school officials, many parents who were illiterate and uneducated need ESL, parenting, and self-help classes. One school held a meeting to teach parents how to help their children in school. Two schools GAO visited offered classes that teach parents life-coping skills, such as how to use public transportation, the bank, and the post office. School officials noted that more parent training was needed.

Instructional Services

Bilingual Instruction

A state regulation required that bilingual education be provided to elementary school LEP students whenever 20 or more students of the same language are present at any one grade level in the district. LEP students representing four language groups—Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Khmer (in order of number)—met this requirement in District A. Bilingual instruction was only offered in Spanish, however. District A received state waivers of the bilingual requirement for Vietnamese, Chinese, and Khmer because bilingual teachers in these languages were not available.

Secondary school LEP students were not required to receive bilingual instruction, but had to be provided ESL instruction.

Overall, about three-quarters of the elementary LEP students—about 50 percent of all students—received bilingual instruction. The district had difficulty providing bilingual education to its large Spanish-speaking LEP population, officials said, because of a shortage of Spanish bilingual teachers. According to a district official, the district had tried recruiting Spanish bilingual teachers from Argentina, Mexico, and Peru. Another official said that only half of the teachers found could provide transcripts from their native countries to document their academic training. Bilingual teachers who were available were concentrated in kindergarten through third grade. The state required that bilingual instruction be provided to LEP students beginning in the earliest grades when the number of bilingual teachers was insufficient to offer a prekindergarten through sixth grade program. Additionally, several hundred Spanish-speaking elementary school students were receiving a pullout bilingual instructional program that provides 45 to 90 minutes of Spanish reading and language arts each day. During the rest of the day, these several hundred students received ESL and academic instruction from a teacher certified in ESL and trained in nonbilingual instructional approaches.

According to District A, a shortage of bilingual teachers in other languages, such as Vietnamese, was the primary reason why bilingual education was not offered in any language other than Spanish. A district official also cited the large geographic distribution of the district as a reason why bilingual education was not provided in any language other than Spanish: Students would have to be bused from their neighborhood schools to a single location to concentrate sufficient numbers for bilingual education. In addition, LEP students who spoke a particular language may have been in several different grades. In one school we visited, for example, 56 Vietnamese LEP students were in seven different grade levels, according to the school principal. Since this school also had another 38 LEP students representing 11 other language backgrounds, it offered an ESL program.

ESL and Nonbilingual Academic Instruction

In 1991-1992, 28 percent of District A's elementary school LEP students, both Spanish and non-Spanish speaking, were assigned to an ESL program, rather than to a bilingual program. According to a district official, most of these students were taught ESL and academic subjects by teachers certified, or pursuing certification, in ESL and trained in nonbilingual instructional approaches. However, almost one-fourth of these students

were taught by ESL teachers who had been granted waivers of state certification requirements. This official said that these teachers generally had a minimum of 2 hours to a maximum of 8 hours of training in cultural sensitivity and nonbilingual instructional approaches. In addition, several hundred elementary school LEP students only received 90 minutes of ESL a day from a certified ESL teacher; for the remainder of the day, they were taught by teachers with no training in how to teach LEP students.

In most cases, District A could not provide bilingual aides to assist its LEP students. District A had 102 bilingual classroom aides, all of whom were Spanish speaking. According to a district official, classroom aides were not available at all grade levels.

The instruction provided to secondary school LEP students varied by school. About 10 percent, or approximately 875, of the secondary school LEP students were taught by ESL teachers who were not certified in ESL, and, according to a district official, had received less than 1 day of training in ESL. In addition, this official said that most secondary school LEP students received academic instruction from teachers who have had less than 1 day of training in how to teach LEP students. Although District A encouraged secondary school academic teachers to become certified in ESL, these teachers had no incentive to become certified and continue teaching academic subjects, because only ESL teachers received a stipend. At one high school we visited, a more comprehensive program for LEP students was offered. At this school, in addition to ESL instruction, LEP students received academic support using nonbilingual approaches in science and history. However, the school was not able to offer a math class incorporating nonbilingual approaches, and, a school official noted, more of these classes in math, science, and history were needed.

Obtaining and Training Teachers

District A has made several efforts to obtain additional bilingual and ESL teachers. It has (1) recruited from Mexico, (2) offered a $3,000 stipend to bilingual teachers and a $1,000 stipend to ESL teachers, and (3) offered an Alternative Certification Program (ACP) to people in the private sector who want to become teachers and already have degrees in other subjects. According to District A's ACP director, ACP participants were required to take college courses in four subjects—linguistics, language acquisition, ESL methodology, and cultural sensitivity. These courses included nonbilingual approaches for instruction in academic subjects. The district also trained participants in a variety of teaching skills, such as lesson planning and classroom management. Participants become certified after completing the college and district training requirements, passing a state certification

exam, and teaching for 1 year in the subject they will teach. Although these efforts have helped District A obtain some of the bilingual and ESL teachers needed—more than 300 participants pursued bilingual certification and more than 50 participants pursued ESL certification in the ACP program from 1985 to 1992—a shortage of bilingual and ESL teachers remained, and District A had to obtain waivers of teacher certification from the state.

In addition, district ESL/bilingual supervisors and outside consultants were available to provide teachers with training in cultural diversity or language acquisition approaches. However, school personnel cited limited resources and time as obstacles to providing additional training to teachers on how to teach LEP students. The extent of training the teachers received in cultural diversity and methods for teaching LEP students was also limited by the extent to which teachers request such training. All District A teachers had to obtain 20 hours of in-service training a year, but this training could be in any subject, for example, math, science, social studies, or methods for teaching LEP students. Several ESL/bilingual supervisors noted that teachers needed more training in how to teach LEP students.

Student Assessment

District A assessed the oral English proficiency of all new students and the oral Spanish proficiency of Spanish-speaking students. In addition, the district used a standardized achievement test in English to test the reading, language, math, science, and social studies skills of students who achieved a district-specified degree of proficiency in English. For Spanish-speaking LEP students in a bilingual program, a Spanish standardized achievement test was also used to assess reading and math skills, but similar assessment instruments were not available for non-Spanish-speaking LEP students.

District A's primary assessment instrument for exiting LEP students was not administered until at least third grade. However, officials said, based on teacher recommendations and grades, LEP students could be administered another assessment instrument in first and second grades.

Federal Funding

Federal funding for immigrant and LEP services in 1991-1992 came from three programs: Chapter 1, EIEA,[2] and Even Start; the district did not receive Title VII funds. According to District A's Superintendent, many immigrant students continued to need specialized language and academic

[2]In District A, all EIEA immigrants are LEP, according to a district official.

instruction, such as intensive English and academic instruction, after they were no longer eligible to receive EIEA funds.

LEP Students and Programs in District B

Demographics

During the last decade, this district's student population decreased by just over 7 percent, from approximately 13,000 in 1982 to almost 12,000 in 1992. During this same time period, student ethnicity changed considerably. For example, the number of Asians increased by more than 1,000 percent, and the proportion increased from 1 percent of the population to 10 percent; the number of Hispanics more than tripled, and the proportion increased from 5 percent of the population to 17 percent. The white student population decreased by more than one-third during this period (see table V.3 for these changes).

Table V.3: Changes in Ethnicity of District B Population

	1982		1992	
Ethnicity	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
White	11,259	87	7,277	61
Hispanic	630	5	1,984	17
African American	963	7	1,557	13
Asian	98	1	1,153	10
Other	13	<1	27	<1
Total	**12,963**	**100[a]**	**11,998**	**100[a]**

[a]Over 100 percent due to rounding.

The bilingual program director estimated that about 800 to 1,000 immigrant and Puerto Rican students were enrolled in the district each year. In 1992, the immigrant population eligible under the EIEA program represented 7 percent of the total student population: these immigrant students came primarily from the Dominican Republic; Haiti; Russia; and the Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Although the total district enrollment decreased during the last decade, the number of LEP students more than tripled, going from 432 in 1982 to 1,427 in 1992. In 1982, the LEP population represented 3 percent of the total population; in 1992, the LEP population increased to 12 percent. Since 1988,

the earliest year for which the district had the required data on specific languages spoken, most of the growth in LEP students occurred in the Spanish-speaking student population, but LEP students came from 13 language backgrounds in 1992 (see table V.4).

Table V.4: Languages Spoken by LEP Students in District B

	1988[a]		1992	
Language	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Spanish	566	45	910	64
Khmer (Cambodian)	452	36	263	18
Russian	33	3	69	5
Greek	64	5	65	5
Vietnamese	47	4	42	3
Laotian	56	4	37	3
Other[b]	38	3	41	3
Total	**1,256**	**100**	**1,427**	**100[c]**

[a]Data not provided for 1982.

[b]In 1988, the district had eight other languages; in 1992, the district had seven other languages. The district did not provide the number of languages for 1982.

[c]Over 100 due to rounding.

The poverty rate of students' families in District B has decreased slightly during the last decade; 40 percent of the students received free or reduced-price meals in 1982, and 35 percent received these meals in 1992. According to a district official, more than 85 percent of immigrant or LEP students received such meals. Aid to Families With Dependent Children data could not be provided.

Challenges Posed

Officials and teachers in District B pointed to several challenges posed by immigrant and LEP students as well as ways in which the district was attempting to meet some of these challenges.

A growing number of immigrant and LEP students who entered secondary schools had limited education. Many were illiterate in their native languages. Secondary schools were challenged to educate these students in English and the required academic subjects in a limited time so that they could graduate from high school.

High transiency among immigrant and LEP students presented a barrier to instruction. This situation has been a problem especially during the district's winter break, when the students visited family in their native countries and did not return to school until well after the break had ended. This circumstance was particularly disruptive to students' education, teachers said, because these students were already generally behind academically. In some cases, students missed so much school, officials said, that they could not be promoted to the next grade or graduate from high school, causing some of these students to become discouraged and drop out of school.

Cultural differences presented barriers to instruction. Because immigrant and LEP students came from cultures different from that of many teachers, officials said, teachers needed training to learn more about these cultures. Without such training, cultural misunderstandings can be a barrier to instruction: for example, one teacher stated that a student ran crying from the classroom for no apparent reason. School officials later realized that a picture of an owl with the child's name on it scared her because the owl is the symbol of death in her native country. District B did not have any bilingual school psychologists to help address the nonacademic needs of the immigrant and LEP students.

Involving parents in the education of their children has proven difficult. The district provided some assistance to the parents of immigrant and LEP students: for example, all schools translated notices into the parents' native languages. Bilingual teachers also telephoned parents to relate school information since many parents were illiterate in their native languages and could not read the notices. In addition, the district maintained a Parent Advisory Council for every language group with a sizeable concentration of students. Currently, it has councils in Greek, Khmer, Laotian, Russian, and Spanish. At council meetings, parents receive information ranging from how to help a child learn to what constitutes child abuse. However, parent participation at the district is limited. For example, one ESL teacher held a special meeting for the parents of 180 LEP students, but only 15 parents attended.

Instructional Services

Bilingual Instruction

The state that District B is located in required that a bilingual program be provided whenever a district had 20 or more students of the same language. About 80 percent of the district's LEP students were in a full

bilingual program in Khmer or Spanish in 1992. In addition, the district provided pullout bilingual programs in Russian, Greek, Lao, and Haitian. About half of all the bilingual teachers, however, have not met all state certification requirements. The state has temporarily waived some staff because of the shortage of certified bilingual teachers in all languages, including Spanish. In addition, some of the Cambodian LEP students did not participate in the bilingual program because parents did not want their children to be bused to the school that provided the program.

The Khmer and Spanish bilingual programs provided native language instruction in most academic subjects. For example, in one elementary school we visited, 75 Cambodian students received native language instruction for half of the day in math, science, social studies, and native language arts; for the other half of the day, these students received ESL instruction. As students became more English proficient, they received greater amounts of academic subject instruction in English. This school's Khmer bilingual program had three bilingual teachers, one bilingual aide, and two ESL instructors. However, the three bilingual teachers were under waivers of state certification requirements because they did not have U.S. college degrees, though two of the three instructors had been teachers in Cambodia.

A high school we visited had a Spanish bilingual program. Spanish bilingual classes were offered in general math, algebra I and II, geometry, U.S. history, world history, geography, physics I, basic physical science, and health. School officials noted that they would like to provide Spanish bilingual classes in biology and chemistry, but could not do so because of a lack of qualified and certified staff.

The Russian bilingual program, located at one elementary school, was a pullout program for elementary school students. The students typically spent 45 minutes a day with the Russian bilingual teacher and were in mainstream classes the rest of the day. Unlike traditional bilingual instruction, however, the Russian bilingual teacher taught the students in English, using Russian only when clarification was needed.

School and district officials were dissatisfied with available native language materials, particularly textbooks. They said that Spanish bilingual materials, while becoming more plentiful than in the past, were not as academically challenging as materials in English. In addition, officials cited a lack of native language materials for languages other than Spanish. For example, the principal of the school with the Khmer bilingual

program stated that students use ditto sheets developed by the staff because no textbooks in Khmer were available. These ditto sheets, he said, lacked colorful pictures and did not look as inviting or substantial as the published textbooks that the mainstream students used. According to the officials, the market for native language materials in languages such as Khmer was not large enough to provide publishers with a financial incentive to publish them.

ESL and Nonbilingual Academic Instruction

The approximately 20 percent of LEP students who were not in a full bilingual program generally received a minimum of 45 minutes of ESL instruction a day. Typically, the LEP students were pulled out of class to receive this instruction. In addition, some of the LEP students in a full bilingual program received ESL instruction from an ESL teacher or a bilingual teacher. Approximately 77 percent of the ESL instructors were not certified, but had been grandfathered into these positions, and most had not received training on instructing LEP students. The district recognized that additional training was needed. During the rest of the day, most of these LEP students were in class with English-only students. The LEP students received no additional academic support in class, and most of the mainstream instructors had not received training on instructing LEP students. The district budgeted only one-tenth of 1 percent of the total district budget on staff development in 1992.

Student Assessment

District B did an informal (not standardized) initial assessment of the oral, reading, and writing proficiency levels of LEP students in English, Greek, Khmer, Lao, Russian, and Spanish. After a student was placed in the school, the school tested the student annually, using a standardized test in English that covered language, math, and reading. LEP students must have obtained a certain degree of English proficiency before they were given this test. The district had a similar standardized test in Spanish, but this test was only for students up to the eighth grade.

Federal Funding

District B did not provide funding documentation. However, the district bilingual program director described how the district used federal funds for LEP students: Although the district had not directly received Title VII funds for several years, it did get some training services from a neighboring district that received these funds. The district also received EIEA funds.[3] The district did not use Chapter 1 funds for LEP support, such as bilingual aides, though LEP students could receive Chapter 1 services after achieving a certain level of English proficiency.

[3]In District B, most immigrant students are LEP, according to the bilingual program director.

According to the bilingual program director, the district received substantially fewer funds for immigrant and LEP students in recent years than in the past, even though these populations had increased significantly. At one point, the district got $140,000 in funds, mostly from the federal government, for immigrant and LEP students. The funds were used to hire staff and buy materials to help instruct immigrant and LEP students. At the time of our visit, the district received about $29,000 for these students, mostly from the federal government.

LEP Students and Programs in District C

Demographics

This district's student population grew dramatically in the last decade, from approximately 47,000 in 1982 to approximately 74,000 in 1992. During this same period, ethnicity changed considerably: for example, the number of Asian students increased by 870 percent, from 3 percent of the total district population to 21 percent; the white student population became a minority population, surpassed by an emerging Hispanic population (see table V.5 for these changes).

Table V.5: Changes in Ethnicity of District C Population

	1982		1992	
Ethnicity	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
White	24,192	52	23,058	31
Hispanic	15,069	32	26,829	36
African American	5,360	12	7,526	10
Asian	1,584	3	15,359	21
Other	547	1	875	1
Total	**46,752**	**100**	**73,647**	**100[a]**

[a]Under 100 percent due to rounding.

Of the approximately 3,000 new students enrolled at the district each year during the decade, 90 percent were immigrants. They came primarily from Mexico and several Southeast Asian countries, including, in order of immigrants' arrival, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The Hmong—who came from a mountain region that encompasses Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand—were the last to arrive; in District C, the Hmong now make up the largest immigrant group from Southeast Asia.

In 1982, the LEP population made up a small percentage, 7 percent, of the total district population and consisted primarily of Spanish speakers. However, by 1992, the LEP population soared to 28 percent, becoming increasingly diverse as well. In 1992, LEP students came from almost 90 diverse language backgrounds. Although the Spanish-speaking LEP population continued to grow, this growth was overshadowed by that of the Southeast Asian population (see table V.6 for the number and percentage of LEP students by language).

Table V.6: Languages Spoken by LEP Students in District C

	1982		1992	
Language	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Spanish	2,213	72	7,857	38
Hmong	519	17	7,471	36
Laotian	25	1	2,619	13
Khmer (Cambodian)	10	<1	1,673	8
Vietnamese	136	4	346	2
Other[a]	189	6	971	5
Total	**3,092**	**100**	**20,937**	**100[b]**

[a]The number of languages is not available for 1982. In 1992, the district had more than 80 other languages.

[b]Over 100 percent due to rounding.

During the last decade, District C's student families' poverty rate has increased dramatically, largely because of the increase in immigrant and LEP students, according to officials. The number of students receiving AFDC increased by 165 percent, from 12,316 students to 32,636. Since 1984, the number of students receiving a free or reduced-price meal increased by 81 percent, from 24,377 students to 44,088. In 1992, 46 percent of the student population received AFDC, and 62 percent received a free or reduced-price meal.

Challenges Posed

Officials and teachers in District C pointed to several challenges posed by immigrant and LEP students as well as ways that the district was attempting to meet some of these challenges.

Large increases in the number of immigrant and LEP students have contributed significantly to the overcrowding at most schools. In addition, because of the families' poverty, some of these students lived in crowded

apartments with other families, contributing to school overcrowding by increasing the number of students living in individual school attendance areas. To address the problem of overcrowding, the district implemented a year-round schedule at approximately one-third of the schools. The year-round schedule helped to alleviate overcrowding since, at any given time, about 25 percent of the student population was on break and not attending class. In addition, the district bused students to schools that were not filled to capacity.

A growing number of immigrant and LEP students who entered secondary school had limited education. Many were illiterate in their native languages. Secondary schools were finding it difficult, in the limited time these students were enrolled, to teach them English and the academic subjects required for graduation.

The district developed a "newcomer school" for secondary school students with little previous education. Students attended this school to learn the survival skills needed in the U.S. high school environment. The skills ranged from learning English and understanding school rules to becoming familiar with class schedules and opening locker combinations. Students must leave the newcomer school too soon, some officials stated, because it has limited capacity and more immigrants continue to enroll. The school was designed for students to attend for 1 year, but they generally stayed for only one semester. Once these immigrant students entered a conventional high school, they had a domino effect on existing LEP students. That is, these newer immigrant students displaced LEP students already in the high school ESL programs because these programs could not accommodate both the new immigrant students and existing LEP students. As a result, officials said, LEP students were forced to move to the next level of ESL before they were ready, and some of them were forced into mainstream classes before they were ready.

Cultural differences presented barriers to instruction. Without training in students' cultures, a principal said, misunderstandings can arise. For example, a principal noted, teachers might pat students on their heads to encourage or console them; however, the Hmong are offended if they are touched on their heads since the head is considered a spiritual part of the body. The district gave approximately 12 hours of cultural awareness training to teachers during the mid-1980s, but had trained only about 30 percent of its teachers.

Emotional needs of students also presented barriers to instruction. District C was attempting to establish greater awareness and sensitivity to the emotional needs of immigrant and LEP students. The emotional needs of these students were significant: many had experienced war trauma and life in refugee camps. Many needed counseling services, district officials said. However, the district has had difficulty finding counselors that speak the students' native languages.

Involving parents in the education of their children has proven difficult. Many immigrant and LEP parents were embarrassed to take active roles at their children's schools because they frequently did not speak English or had limited schooling. Some principals in District C talked about the importance of parental involvement; they described how they tried to alleviate the embarrassment of immigrant and LEP parents by encouraging them to participate in activities they were comfortable doing. The more comfortable parents are with the school, principals felt, the more likely parents can contribute to school decisions. One principal encouraged any parental involvement—from parents helping with the school's gardening to sharing cultural information in the classroom, such as telling stories or showing dances from their native countries.

District C had taken several steps to involve parents. For example, translators were available to facilitate the schools' communication with parents. In addition, the district employed translators when members of a family could not communicate with each other; this situation may happen because students, as they become proficient in English, may lose their ability to communicate in their native languages. For immigrant and LEP parents, the district also offered parenting classes on raising children in the United States. These classes dealt with issues that the parents may not have had to be concerned about in their home countries, such as gangs and drugs.

Instructional Services

Bilingual Instruction

The state that District C is located in had no requirements for providing bilingual instruction, but the district provided it to some of its students. Overall, 3 percent of all LEP students were in bilingual programs, which were only offered in Spanish; 8 percent of the Spanish-speaking LEP population received this instruction. Although the number of Spanish-speaking LEP students had more than tripled during the last 10

years, the district served fewer Spanish speakers through its bilingual program than 10 years ago.

In District C, bilingual instruction was difficult to provide to all the LEP students because these students came from almost 90 diverse language backgrounds. Sometimes, groups of students who spoke the same language were dispersed over a number of schools and grade levels so that bilingual instruction was difficult. For example, District C had more than 1,600 Khmer-speaking students, but they were dispersed over 59 schools and in different grade levels.

Even when certain schools had large concentrations of LEP students, District C had difficulty providing bilingual instruction. For example, the district had large concentrations of (in order of number) Spanish, Hmong, and Laotian LEP students, but bilingual instruction was provided only to some Spanish speakers. A number of district officials cited a shortage of Spanish, Hmong, and Laotian bilingual teachers as the primary reason for providing little or no bilingual education. According to district officials, the shortage of bilingual Spanish teachers was caused, in part, by some having chosen not to teach in the bilingual program. These teachers perceived their workload to be much greater than the workload of mainstream teachers because they had to deliver the same curriculum in two languages. In addition, officials noted, District C did not offer any stipends to bilingual teachers as compensation for the extra work. Among the Hmong and the Laotians, there was another reason for the shortage of bilingual teachers: Most of the Hmong and Laotians who were teachers in their home countries were unable to receive state teaching certificates because they could not pass the English reading and writing portions of the certification test.

ESL and Nonbilingual Academic Instruction

Among the LEP students, 97 percent received ESL services and did not participate in bilingual programs. Of this 97 percent, about 11 percent received some other type of support in academic classes: about 1 percent received such support from bilingual instructional aides, and about 10 percent received Sheltered English instruction, in addition to ESL instruction.

LEP students received a minimum of 1 hour of ESL instruction a day. An LEP student was typically pulled out of class to receive this instruction. Most of the ESL instruction was provided by teachers who were not ESL certified. During the rest of the day, most LEP students were in class with

English-only students. The LEP students received no additional support in academic classes.

At one high school, the district recently established a Sheltered English curriculum for LEP students that covered science, social studies, and math. Implementing this model took considerable effort and resources. For example, a noted expert on Sheltered English techniques conducted training for teachers at the school.

District C recently opened a new elementary school, located in an area with many immigrant and LEP students, designed to be a model school for education reform. This school had special strategies for educating its students. For example, teachers learned the curriculum for two grade levels, such as grades 1 and 2, thereby enabling the teacher and students to spend more time together and enhance continuity. In addition, students stayed at least 1 hour beyond the normal school day. During this time, students worked in groups of three, from different grades, collaborating on projects; older students tutored younger students, including providing English and native language assistance and academic subject support. The principal conducted an extensive search to hire 37 teachers who shared her philosophy of (1) promoting native cultures and (2) ensuring that academic subjects were provided through Sheltered English strategies with native language assistance. The school provided 180 hours of professional development in language acquisition and provided additional training on cultures represented at the school. Most teachers at the school were ESL certified.

Obtaining and Training Teachers

The district was working on ways to obtain Spanish, Hmong, and Laotian bilingual teachers. For example, the district was paying half of the college tuition for 40 bilingual teacher aides so they could become bilingual teachers. District C also went to other countries to recruit teachers from diverse language backgrounds. Many of the teachers providing services to immigrant and LEP students were inadequately trained. About 72 percent of the LEP students were not served by certified ESL and bilingual teachers. Most mainstream teachers had not been given training in areas such as Sheltered English and cultural sensitivity. According to district officials, since the district eliminated the Bilingual Education Director position a few years ago, no official was responsible for tracking the number of teachers receiving training or overseeing the quality of the training.

Student Assessment

The district conducted standardized testing of its students for a variety of reasons, for example, to determine students' class assignments and

eligibility for programs such as Chapter 1. District C formally assessed LEP students' English proficiency and, if the LEP student was Spanish speaking, Spanish proficiency. Elementary school LEP students must have achieved a certain level of English proficiency before they were given a standardized test in math, but high school LEP students' math proficiency was assessed with a standardized test regardless of English proficiency. The district did little or no assessment of the literacy or proficiency levels of LEP students in other languages.

Federal Funding

The district received federal funds specifically targeted to LEP students through Title VII and EIEA in 1992.[4] The Title VII grant funded instructional approaches and materials for language development and cultural sensitivity at three elementary schools; 1993-94 will be the last year of funding for this 5-year grant. District C did not use Chapter 1 funds for LEP educational services.

LEP Students and Programs in District D

Demographics

In 1982, this district's student population was 28,877; in 1992 it was similar—28,739. However, student enrollment fluctuated in the middle of the decade and dropped to a low of 23,776 in 1988 before increasing. The Hispanic population increased by 30 percent from 1988 (the earliest year for which the district had data on ethnicity) to 1992 and continued to be District D's largest ethnic group. (See table V.7 for these changes.)

[4]In District C, all immigrants were LEP, according to a district official.

Table V.7: Changes in Ethnicity of District D Population

	1988[a]		1992	
Ethnicity	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	7,945	32	7,921	28
Hispanic	10,462	43	13,610	47
African American	1,774	7	1,812	6
Asian	4,366	18	5,383	19
Other	18	1	13	1
Total	**24,565**	**100[b]**	**28,739**	**100**

[a]Ethnicity data were not available for 1982.

[b]Over 100 percent due to rounding.

The immigrant population in District D more than doubled since 1988 and accounted for 23 percent of the total population. District D had many students from China, the Dominican Republic, and Korea and had increasing numbers of students from countries such as India, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, and the former republics of the USSR. In 1992, District D's immigrant students were from 94 different countries.

From 1988 to 1992, the LEP population in District D grew from 18 percent to 25 percent, mostly because of an increase in Spanish-speaking LEP students. Although the majority of District D's 7,108 LEP students were Spanish speaking, the number of students speaking other languages had grown by more than 48 percent since 1988. In 1992, District D's LEP students represented 60 diverse languages. More than half of District D's schools had LEP students speaking more than 15 languages. Two schools had students speaking at least 30 languages and more than 450 LEP students. Each of these two schools had large numbers of Spanish, Chinese, and Korean (in order of number) LEP students but relatively smaller numbers (1 to 13) of LEP students speaking other languages. (See table V.8.)

Table V.8: Languages Spoken by LEP Students in District D

	1988		1992	
Language	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Spanish	2,689	61	4,578	64
Chinese	505	11	745	10
Korean	359	8	462	6
Romanian	102	2	169	2
Urdu	89	2	112	2
Other[a]	651	15	1,042	15
Total	**4,395**	**100[b]**	**7,108**	**100[b]**

[a]Data on the number of languages in 1988 were unavailable. However, in 1986 the district reported LEP students speaking 52 other languages. In 1992, the district reported LEP students speaking 54 other languages.

[b]Under 100 percent due to rounding.

More than half of District D's students were poor. During the last 3 years, students living in poor families—those receiving AFDC or free or reduced-price lunches—increased from 42 percent to 54 percent. According to school officials, many immigrant and LEP students' families received AFDC and lived in single-parent households.

Challenges Posed

District D administrators, school officials, and teachers described several challenges faced in educating immigrant and LEP students as well as ways in which the district was attempting to meet some of these challenges.

A growing number of immigrant students with limited schooling were entering all grade levels throughout the school year. Some students had a limited education because they missed schooling while traveling—sometimes for 2 years—to reach the United States. According to one teacher, the task of getting students with a limited education ready, in a short time, to go to the next grade can be overwhelming, because, in addition to not speaking English, these students often lacked a prior formal education.

Large increases in the number of immigrant and LEP students have contributed significantly to the overcrowding at most schools. The schools in District D were so cramped for space that, at one junior high school, ESL classes were held in a hallway that was converted into makeshift classrooms. The district capped admissions to kindergarten, established an annex site for kindergarten classes, and bused students 5 to 7 miles

away to another district. Numerous kindergarten students were bused there each day, many of whom were immigrant and LEP. To address the problem of overcrowding, the district is building two new schools; however, district officials noted that the overcrowding will continue even after the schools are completed.

Involving parents in the education of their children has proven difficult. Many immigrant and LEP parents were uneducated and illiterate in their native languages as well as in English. District D sent home written notices and report cards in Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and Spanish, but if parents were illiterate, schools found it necessary to call parents at home to communicate important information. However, because many different languages were represented, schools still had difficulty communicating with parents. Interpreters were available in Chinese, Korean, and Spanish, but when parents spoke other languages, parents had to provide their own interpreters.

District D's efforts to encourage greater parent involvement ranged from providing cultural sensitivity training to all school secretaries and administrators, because they interacted with parents daily, to holding parent fairs at schools, at which parents learned about their childrens' academic programs and participated in cultural activities. One school had a parent volunteer program. In addition, some schools offered training workshops to parents on a variety of issues, including health, nutrition, and parenting skills.

Instructional Services

Bilingual Instruction

According to District D's bilingual supervisor, state regulations required that schools provide bilingual education to LEP students whenever 20 or more students speaking the same language were present in the school in a single grade. District D provided bilingual education to half of its LEP students, including bilingual programs in Spanish, Chinese, and Korean (in order of number). About 2,000 Spanish, Chinese, and Korean LEP students were not in bilingual programs because (1) their parents chose not to enroll them in the programs or (2) there were inadequate numbers present in a single grade at a single school. LEP students who spoke other languages were dispersed across many schools in the district; the number of these students at any one school speaking any one language was insufficient to require bilingual education under the state criteria. According to district officials, these LEP students would have to be bused

to one location to have a sufficient concentration of LEP students for bilingual education. District D has not chosen this option.

According to district officials, instructional materials for the Chinese and Korean bilingual programs were difficult to obtain and were of poor quality. In most cases, bilingual teachers had to develop materials themselves. District officials reported having little difficulty hiring bilingual teachers in Spanish, Chinese, and Korean because the district was located in a neighborhood that was more economically vital and, therefore, more attractive than others nearby. However, the district had found obtaining bilingual teachers in other languages very difficult.

ESL and Nonbilingual Academic Instruction

District D's LEP students who were not provided with bilingual education received ESL instruction. State guidelines required that, at a minimum, LEP students receive 180 minutes per week of ESL instruction from a certified ESL teacher. In general, District D's students were pulled out of an English-only classroom daily for 35 to 45 minutes of English and academic subject instruction by a certified ESL teacher; all but 1 of the 66 teachers who provided this instruction were certified in ESL. Generally, however, District D could not provide native language aides to LEP students; with the exception of bilingual aides for some kindergarten classes, District D had only been able to provide native language aides through its Title VII grants.

District D tried to provide LEP students with academic instruction incorporating Sheltered English or other nonbilingual instructional approaches. Not all such students received this instruction, however. We visited one middle school in which LEP students received no specialized academic assistance beyond a 45-minute period of ESL language instruction. Some students did not receive any academic instruction at all, but received ESL language instruction for the entire day.

Obtaining and Training Teachers

To obtain some of their Spanish bilingual teachers, District D has recruited teachers from Spain and Puerto Rico. District D did not offer a stipend to its bilingual or ESL teachers.

District D developed a language arts program for all students that used a number of integrated language acquisition methods, similar to instructional methods frequently used with Sheltered English. During school years 1990-1991 and 1991-92, District D provided all mainstream elementary school teachers with 15 hours of training in these methods; the district planned to train mainstream secondary school teachers as well by June 1993. According to District and school officials, these methods were

useful for instructing all students, including LEP students. According to one elementary school mainstream teacher, the district training had helped her integrate both LEP and English-only students during instruction.

The language diversity and large number of LEP students in District D's state prompted the state to require that, during school year 1992-93, all mainstream teachers receive 7.5 hours of training in cultural diversity and instructional approaches for LEP students. District D received permission from the state to apply the training provided for the language arts program to the state training requirement.

Student Assessment

District D assessed the English language proficiency—listening, speaking, and reading—of all LEP students with a standardized test each spring. Hispanic students were also tested for their Spanish language proficiency—listening, speaking, and reading—with a standardized test each spring. Students could not exit a bilingual or ESL program until they had achieved sufficient English language skills, as measured by these tests; generally, students exited after 3 years. In addition, students participated in citywide testing of their reading, math, and science skills. Citywide reading tests—which were developed locally—were also available in Chinese and Spanish, as well as English. However, students who had lived in the United States for less than 2 years were exempt from citywide testing.

Federal Funding

According to District D's finance officer, federal funding for immigrant and LEP programs came entirely from Title VII and EIEA[5] funds. District D participated or planned to participate in eight different Title VII projects for LEP students. Current projects included a computer-based Spanish language development program and a Spanish math achievement program. Planned projects included an English program to improve students' math and science skills and a professional development program for teachers. According to the district finance officer, this district did not use Chapter 1 funds for LEP educational services.

[5]In District D, approximately 60 percent of immigrants were LEP, according to a district official.

LEP Students and Programs in District E

Demographics

This district's student population grew dramatically in the last decade, from about 57,500 in 1982 to about 74,000 in 1992. During this same period, ethnicity changed considerably: for example, the number of Asian students increased by more than 140 percent, from 5,300 to almost 13,000 students. Although the district population grew, the number of white students decreased by almost one-third (see table V.9 for these changes).

Table V.9: Changes in Ethnicity of District E Population

	1982		1992	
Ethnicity	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
White	28,076	49	19,215	26
Hispanic	11,382	20	24,674	33
African American	11,138	19	14,362	19
Asian	5,295	9	12,841	17
Other	1,607	3	2,992	4
Total	**57,498**	**100**	**74,084**	**100[a]**

[a]Under 100 percent due to rounding.

A large number of immigrant students enrolled at the district each year; officials estimated that during 1992 approximately 20 immigrant students enrolled each school day. During 1992, the immigrant population represented 10 percent of the total student population. These immigrants came primarily from Mexico; Latin America; the Philippines; and the Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Most students from Southeast Asia came from Cambodia.

In 1982, the LEP population represented about 14 percent of the total student population. This LEP population was diverse, speaking more than 11 languages, although the majority of them spoke Spanish. By 1992, the LEP population soared to about one-third of the total student population, speaking more than 40 languages (see table V.10 for the number and percentage of LEP students by language).

Table V.10: Languages Spoken by LEP Students in District E

	1982		1992	
Language	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Spanish	4,515	58	15,433	64
Khmer (Cambodian)	1,336	17	5,213	22
Vietnamese	723	9	903	4
Tagalog (Philippino)	200	3	797	3
Laotian	443	6	449	2
Other[a]	598	8	1,298	5
Total	**7,815**	**100[b]**	**24,093**	**100**

[a]In 1982, the district had at least 5 other languages; in 1992, the district had more than 35 other languages.

[b]Over 100 percent due to rounding.

During the last decade, District E's poverty rate of student families has increased, largely due to the increase in immigrant and LEP students, district officials said. Since 1984, the number of students receiving AFDC increased by more than 55 percent, from 14,986 students to 23,259. In 1992, 63 percent of the elementary and junior high school students (33,940) received free or reduced-price meals. (District officials could not provide these data for high school students or for earlier years.) Many immigrant and LEP students came from poor families, officials noted, and frequently arrived at school hungry because they did not eat regular meals at home. The breakfast and lunch the students received at school may have been the only regular meals they ate, a school official stated.

Challenges Posed

Officials and teachers in District E pointed to several challenges posed by immigrant and LEP students as well as ways in which the district is attempting to meet some of these challenges.

A growing number of immigrant and LEP students entering secondary school had limited education. Many were illiterate in their native languages. Secondary schools were finding it difficult, in the limited time these students were enrolled, to teach them English and the academic subjects required to graduate.

The district has developed programs at four schools—two middle and two high schools—geared to serve older LEP and immigrant students who are illiterate in their native languages. Students in these programs received

specialized instruction in basic concepts of English, math, science, and social studies; typically students stay in the program for 1 year. At one of the middle schools we visited, where students came primarily from Mexico and countries in Latin America and Southeast Asia, these classes had no more than 30 students and two instructors: one taught only in English, using Sheltered English techniques; the other taught primarily in Spanish.

Large increases in the number of immigrant and LEP students have contributed significantly to overcrowding at many schools. Some schools had approximately four or five times more students living in their enrollment areas than the schools could serve. To address the problem of overcrowding, the district bused students, many of whom were immigrant or LEP, from the inner city to schools in more suburban areas of the district that were not filled to capacity.

The district has established a centralized assignment center to enroll the large and diverse number of LEP students. The district was better able to accommodate the diversity of languages and large number of students, officials said, by centralizing its resources rather than by having these resources dispersed among different schools. For example, the center's staff collectively spoke 14 languages, which would be difficult to have at a single school site. Staff at the assignment center registered LEP students and assessed their English proficiency, provided immunizations, and gave free medical exams to kindergarten and first-grade students. In addition, the assignment center staff, using parents' native languages (if 1 of the 14), informed parents about district policies and procedures relating to homework, discipline, academic expectations, dress codes, bus rules, and resources.

High transiency among some immigrant and LEP students presented a barrier to instruction. This situation has been a problem, especially during the district's winter break. The break was 2 weeks long, but it was not uncommon for some immigrant and LEP students to take up to 6 weeks to travel long distances to visit family in their home country or for family emergencies. This travel was especially disruptive to students' education, officials said, because these students were already generally behind academically. In addition, since parents frequently did not notify the school about the extended leave, the school did not know whether the student was coming back. School officials sometimes had to give the absent student's seat to a new student because of the continuous influx of students. When the student returned from the extended break, he or she

sometimes had to go to another school in the district because the former class was filled to capacity.

Cultural differences presented barriers to instruction. Without training in students' cultures, officials said, misunderstandings can arise. For example, some teachers thought their Southeast Asian students were being abused by their parents when the students came to school with marks on their foreheads. These teachers subsequently learned that the families practice "coining," in which heated coins are applied to the child's body to cure illness and release evil spirits. The district provided 30 hours of cultural sensitivity training to teachers obtaining ESL certification, but not to teachers of academic subjects.

Emotional needs of students were a barrier to instruction. District E was attempting to address what officials cited as significant emotional needs of immigrant and LEP students. The district has tried to provide counselors who spoke the students' languages to address students' emotional needs. However, in 1992, the district had only five bilingual counselors—four who spoke Spanish and one who spoke Samoan.

Involving parents in the education of their children has proven difficult. When funds were available, the district hired translators to facilitate the schools' communication with parents. This effort included situations in which students could not communicate with their parents because, district officials said, students, as they become proficient in English, may lose their ability to speak their native languages. For immigrant and LEP parents, the district also offered some parenting classes on raising children in the United States. For example, these classes may show what parents can do to encourage their children to read more at home.

It was difficult for many immigrant and LEP parents to take active roles at their children's schools because their children were frequently bused to schools on the other side of the city. Frequently, the parents did not have transportation to the school. In addition, one child may be at a different school from another child, sometimes both far from home. To help parents attend an open house meeting, one principal rented buses to transport the parents to the school. However, this event was a one-time effort. Parents still had a difficult time visiting the school on an as-needed basis.

Instructional Services

Bilingual Instruction

The state that District E is located in had no legislative requirements for providing bilingual instruction, but the district provided such instruction to some of its students. Overall, 12 percent of all LEP students were in bilingual programs. Bilingual instruction was only offered in Spanish, and 19 percent of the Spanish-speaking LEP population received this instruction.

In District E, bilingual instruction was difficult to provide to all the LEP students because they came from about 40 different language backgrounds. Sometimes, even when the language background was the same, the students were dispersed over a number of schools and grade levels so that bilingual education was difficult. For example, in 1992, this district had more than 900 Vietnamese LEP students, but they were dispersed over 71 schools and were in different grades.

District E had difficulty providing bilingual education even when given schools had large concentrations of LEP students. For example, there were large concentrations (in order of number) of Spanish- and Khmer-speaking LEP students, but bilingual instruction was provided only to Spanish speakers, on a limited basis as a result of limited funding. A number of district officials cited a shortage of Spanish, Cambodian, and Vietnamese bilingual teachers as the primary reason for providing little or no bilingual instruction. District E did not offer any stipends to bilingual teachers. Among the Cambodian and Vietnamese, there was another reason for the shortage of bilingual teachers: Most of the Cambodian and Vietnamese who were teachers in their home countries had been unable to receive state teaching certificates because they could not pass the English reading and writing portions of the certification test. In addition, it was difficult to document the college credits these teachers received in their home countries, often due to the political circumstances surrounding their departure.

ESL and Nonbilingual Academic Instruction

The district provided ESL instruction for the 88 percent of students who were not in bilingual programs. Generally, the students were pulled out of mainstream classes for a minimum of 30 minutes of ESL daily; during the rest of the day, most were in classes with English-speaking students. In addition, 22 percent of the district's LEP students received support in academic subjects, either through Sheltered English instruction or bilingual aides.

The district's written plan for serving LEP students raised questions about the qualifications of its teachers. The plan noted that many had not been fully trained to meet LEP students' needs. District records showed that about half of the LEP students in the district were taught by teachers not certified in ESL and bilingual instruction in 1992. A district official noted that a shortage of qualified staff resulted in the district's hiring bilingual interns who were proficient in their native languages but had not had teacher training. These interns received emergency credentials, and the district provided training. The district had also hired college students and, in a few cases, parents to serve as instructional aides. The district did not provide training to teachers of academic subjects in how to teach LEP students.

Obtaining and Training Teachers

The district was working on ways to obtain bilingual teachers. For example, the district was trying to recruit new teachers, retrain current staff, and encourage bilingual high school students to pursue teaching as a future career. The district was also trying to initiate a career ladder program that would (1) groom certain bilingual students and aides for college and (2) fund tuition and expenses for them. However, according to district officials, the outlook for this program was not hopeful because of a lack of funds.

In addition, district officials stated that the universities were not preparing teachers to instruct LEP students. The district recognized that teacher training was a problem and was working on remedying this situation. For example, one school offered a 4-hour, in-house training session on LEP teaching strategies to all of its teachers. In addition, all new teachers hired at the district had to obtain ESL or bilingual certification.

Student Assessment

District E assessed the English proficiency of all LEP students initially at the district's assignment center. In addition, the assignment center staff assessed native language oral, reading, and writing proficiency in Chinese, Khmer, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog (Philippino), and Vietnamese. The district developed the nonstandardized tests used for these assessments for initial screening purposes only. For Spanish-speaking LEP students served by bilingual programs, the district used a standardized test in Spanish to assess math and reading ability. Such tests were not available for students who spoke other languages; these students were tested, using English-language tests, once they had achieved a certain level of English proficiency.

Federal Funding

The district received federal funds for LEP students through the EIEA[6] program. The district had not received Title VII funding since 1987. Although federal funds specifically targeted for LEP students were limited, almost one-third of the LEP students received educational services through Chapter 1 in 1992. At some of its schools, the district used Chapter 1 funds for bilingual aides and other instructional services for LEP students.

[6]In District E, most immigrant students were LEP, according to a district official.

Scope and Methodology of Census Data Analysis

Our analysis of Census data used a special tabulation provided by Census for our earlier study on demographics of school-age children. Our report on that study provides a detailed description of the data tabulation. Key factors related to this study of LEP students are described in the following sections.

The Special Tabulation of 1980 and 1990 Decennial Census Data

In October 1992, we contracted with the Bureau of the Census to obtain a specially designed tabulation of 1980 and 1990 decennial census data. This tabulation is a subset of the 1980 and 1990 Decennial Census Sample Edited Detail Files containing characteristics of the population of specific geographic units. Census created the tabulation from its detailed sample files containing individual records on the population of the entire United States. Census's 1990 detailed files represent a 15.5-percent sample of the total U.S. population and a 16-percent sample of all U.S. households. Census's 1980 detailed files represent an 18.2-percent sample of the total U.S. population and an 18.4-percent sample of all U.S. households.

Contents of the Special Tabulation

The tabulation contains detailed information on the economic, social, and demographic characteristics of the U.S. population, with a particular focus on children—persons aged birth to 17—living in families.[1] The tabulation contains this information for certain geographic units and age groups, and generally includes comparable data for both 1980 and 1990.

Geographic Location

The tabulation includes detailed characteristics on the population of every county or county equivalent[2] in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii.[3] Counties can be aggregated into states, regions, or the nation.

[1]Census defines a family as consisting of a householder and one or more other persons living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit—a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied as separate living quarters. All persons in a household who are related to the householder are regarded as members of his or her family. A household can contain only one family for purposes of census tabulations. Not all households contain families, since a household may consist of a group of unrelated individuals or one person living alone.

[2]In Louisiana, the county equivalent is the parish. In Alaska, county equivalents are organized as boroughs and census areas. Some states—like Maryland—have "independent cities," which are treated as counties for statistical purposes.

[3]Our tabulation does not include information on the population of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, or other outlying areas of the United States.

Age

For both 1980 and 1990, the tabulation contains information on populations by single year of age for persons from birth through age 7. It also includes information on persons in age groups 8 to 11, 12 to 17, 18 to 24, 25 to 64, and 65 years and older.

Poverty Status/Income

The tabulation contains information on household income and poverty status for all persons for whom the Census can determine a poverty status.[4] Census derives information on income and poverty status from answers to census questions concerning income received by persons 15 years and older during the calendar year before the census year. Thus, the 1990 decennial census contains information on persons' 1989 calendar year income. Information on persons' poverty status in the tabulation is based on the standard definition of poverty status used by Census and prescribed by the Office of Management and Budget as a statistical standard for federal agencies.[5]

Race and Ethnicity

The tabulation contains information on 22 separate racial and ethnic classifications. (See table VI.1.) The tabulation's racial/ethnic classifications are based on the census question regarding Hispanic origin. Thus, the non-Hispanic classifications—white, black, and so on—are for non-Hispanic members of those racial groups only. The Hispanic categories include Hispanic persons of all races. The tabulation includes racial and ethnic classifications that are comparable in definition for 1980 and 1990, except for the categories "Central/South American" and "Other Hispanic." Census calculated the "Central/South American" classification for 1990 but not for 1980, when it included these persons in the "Other Hispanic" classification.

[4]Census does not determine poverty status for institutionalized persons, persons in military group quarters and in college dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years of age. These persons are excluded from the denominator when Census calculates poverty rates—the percentage of persons in poverty.

[5]Census determines poverty thresholds on the basis of family size and the corresponding poverty level income for that family size. The Census and GAO tabulation classifies the family income of each family or unrelated individual according to their corresponding family size category. For example, for the 1990 census, the poverty cut-off for a family of four was a 1989 income of $12,674. Census counts an individual or family and its members as poor if its annual before-tax cash income is below the corresponding poverty threshold for that size of family.

Table VI.1: Contents of the Special Tabulation: Racial and Ethnic Characteristics, 1980 and 1990 Decennial Censuses

Not of Hispanic origin	Hispanic origin
Total white	Mexican
Total black	Puerto Rican
Asian and Pacific Islander:	Cuban
Chinese	Central/South American
Japanese	Other Hispanic
Filipino	
Asian Indian	
Korean	
Vietnamese	
Cambodian	
Hmong	
Laotian	
Thai	
Other Asian	
Pacific Islander, except Hawaiian	
Hawaiian	
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	
Other races	

Immigrant Status

The tabulation's immigrant variable includes information on those persons who are foreign born and not of U.S. parents. It also includes a separate "first generation" or "recent arrival" category for those persons who are native born but who have a foreign-born mother[6] who came to the United States during the 10 years before the census.[7] In this report, we typically define the foreign born and first generation categories as "immigrant."

This variable places people aged birth to 17 who are not in a family in a separate category.

Language Characteristics

The tabulation also contains information on the language spoken by the householder and on English proficiency. (See table VI.2.) Except where

[6]Although somewhat more narrow, this definition is consistent with research definitions of the foreign stock population. The foreign stock population is considered crucial to understanding that segment of the population with the strongest foreign language and cultural experience.

[7]For 1980, the recent arrival category includes native-born children with a foreign-born mother who immigrated to the United States during the previous 10 years (back to 1970). For those children who have no mother, the question examines the father's place of origin. Children without either parent are classified as nonimmigrant.

noted, the tabulation has comparable data for these variables for both 1980 and 1990.

Ability to Speak English

The tabulation includes information on persons 5 years of age and older on the basis of their ability to speak English. Categories include people who "speak English only," "speak English very well," "speak English well," "do not speak English well," and "do not speak English at all."

Language Spoken Other Than English

For those households in which one or more persons aged 5 years or older speak a language other than English, the tabulation includes information on the language spoken by the householder. The tabulation distributes such persons among 16 different language classifications. The language spoken by the householder may not be spoken by all other members of the household. Thus, persons who speak only English may have a non-English household language assigned to them.

Table VI.2: Contents of the Special Tabulation: Linguistic Characteristics, 1980 and 1990 Decennial Censuses

Language spoken at home:[a]	
English spoken only	Language spoken other than English:
	Spanish
	Portuguese
	French/Creole
	Russian
	Chinese
	Japanese
	Tagalog/Philippino
	Asian Indian/Pakistani
	Korean
	Vietnamese
	Other Asian language
	American Indian or Eskimo
	Italian
	Arabic
	Other languages
Ability to speak English:[b]	
Speaks only English	Does not speak only English:
	Speaks English very well
	Speaks English well
	Speaks English not well
	Speaks English not at all

[a]This variable places persons aged birth to 17 who are not in a family in a separate category.

[b]This variable places persons aged 5 to 17 who are not in a family in a separate category. It excludes all persons under 5 years of age.

Variables Created From the Special Tabulation

GAO Definition of Children With Limited English Proficiency

Using the special tabulation data for 1980 and 1990, we created a variable classifying children by their English proficiency. In general, LEP children have difficultly speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English. However, currently, no nationally accepted definition of LEP exists, and

consensus is lacking on the criteria for determining LEP. This lack is particularly true regarding the level of language skills that constitutes limited proficiency in English.

Following the definition used by the Congressional Research Service when it uses Census data to estimate the LEP population, we defined as LEP children all persons aged 5 to 17 living in families whom Census reported as speaking English "well," "not well," or "not at all."[8] Current estimates by the Department of Education, the Council of State Chief School Officers, and other sources place the number of total school-age LEP students at between 2.3 million and 3.5 million. Our definition yields an estimate of slightly more than 2.3 million children.

GAO Analysis of 25 Largest Cities

The tabulation contains detailed information on counties and metropolitan areas but not cities. Thus, we analyzed detailed data for the 39 counties the Census identified as containing a part or all of the 25 largest cities as determined by their total population in 1990 (see table VI.3). For some cities, such as New York or San Francisco, the county or counties are exactly contiguous with the city's boundaries. For other cities, such as Detroit (Wayne County) or Cleveland (Cuyahoga County), the counties contain other jurisdictions besides the city. For some cities, such as Chicago, most of the city is within one county (Cook), although parts of it are also in other counties.

[8]Several reasons exist for defining a person who speaks English "well" as LEP. First, analysis by Census performed on adults during the early 1980s suggested that the "speaks English well" category had considerable variation in actual English-speaking ability—many who said they spoke English well did not do so—and such variation may be just as large among children. In addition, there are other dimensions of LEP—some may speak English well but may be unable to read it or understand it.

Table VI.3: Census Designations of Counties Containing 25 Largest Cities in Total Population in 1990, Special Tabulation of Census Data, 1990

City	Counties
New York City	Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, Richmond
Los Angeles	Los Angeles
Chicago	Cook, Dupage[a]
Houston	Fort Bend, Harris, Montgomery[a]
Philadelphia	Philadelphia
San Diego	San Diego
Detroit	Wayne
Dallas	Collin, Dallas, Denton, Kaufman, Rockwall[a]
Phoenix	Maricopa
San Antonio	Bexar
San Jose	Santa Clara
Baltimore	Baltimore
Indianapolis	Marion
San Francisco	San Francisco
Jacksonville	Duval
Columbus	Fairfield, Franklin[a]
Milwaukee	Milwaukee, Washington, Waukesha[a]
Memphis	Shelby
Washington, D.C.	Washington, D.C.
Boston	Suffolk
Seattle	King
El Paso	El Paso
Cleveland	Cuyahoga
New Orleans	Orleans Parish
Nashville	Davidson

[a]Most of the city is located in one county: Chicago is in Cook, Houston is in Harris, Dallas is in Dallas, Milwaukee is in Milwaukee, and Columbus is in Franklin.

Sampling Errors

Because the tabulation is based on the 1980 and 1990 Decennial Census Sample Edited Detail Files, which contain a sample of individual population records, each reported estimate has an associated sampling error. The size of the sampling error reflects the precision of the estimate: the smaller the error, the more precise the estimate. Sampling errors for estimates from the tabulation were calculated at the 95-percent confidence level. This level means that the chances are about 19 out of 20 that the actual number or percentage being estimated falls within the range defined by our estimate, plus or minus the sampling error. For example, if

we estimated that 30 percent of a group has a particular characteristic and the sampling error is 1 percentage point, a 95-percent chance exists that the actual percentage is between 29 and 31.

Generally, the sampling errors for estimated characteristics for the nation, the 533 county group, and the 25 largest metropolitan areas did not exceed 0.5 percentage points at the 95-percent confidence level.

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